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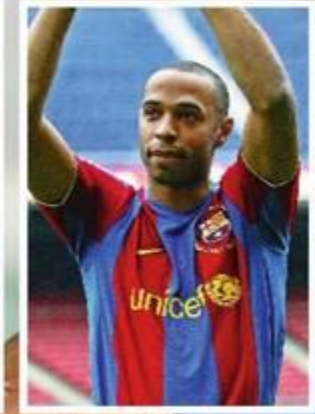

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SO MANY events, so little space. Brazil's victory in the Copa America; another triumph for Argentina in the Under-20 World Cup; the arrival of a certain Englishman in Major League Soccer; record transfer spending by English clubs. With so many big stories, it's been hard to decide on a cover this month. But the return of Juventus to the Italian first division is a major story in anybody's book. It's also been impossible to cover everything in one issue, so a full report on the Asian Cup follows next month.

We've deliberately avoided previewing the new Premier League campaign, concentrating instead on the countries that others fail to reach. But the spate of foreign takeovers of English clubs, not least Thaksin Shinawatra's purchase of Manchester City, is a subject that we will be drawn to again through the season. It is truly remarkable – and appalling – that Thaksin's actions have raised so little comment from the English football establishment.

Next month, we publish a special edition previewing the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Cup. See you then.

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STARTER FOR TEN

Big questions of the moment

1 WILL BRAZIL'S COPA AMERICA SUCCESS KEEP DUNGA IN A JOB UNTIL 2010?
The coach has certainly improved his chances of being at the helm at the next World Cup after victory over arch-rivals Argentina in the Final. More, pages 20 & 84.

2 WILL A MONTH GO BY WHEN LIONEL MESSI DOESN'T SCORE A WONDERGOAL?
Argentina's wonderkid scored another beauty, against Mexico in the Copa America semi-finals. More, page 84.

3 WILL BARCA'S DEFENSIVE SIGNINGS GIVE THEM THE EDGE IN SPAIN NEXT SEASON?
Gabriel Milito, Eric Abidal and Yaya Toure arrived to strengthen the Catalans' bid to take the title back from Real Madrid. More, page 42.

4 WHY ARE GERMANS SO IN VOGUE AT REAL MADRID?
Bernd Schuster was appointed coach and defender Christoph Metzelder joined from Borussia Dortmund. More, page 42.

5 CAN ANYTHING STOP THE PREMIERSHIP TRANSFER SPENDING BOOM?
Record sums have been spent by English clubs this summer. More, page 16.

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6 WHY HAVE SO FEW PEOPLE IN ENGLAND QUESTIONED THAKSIN SHINAWATRA'S TAKEOVER OF MANCHESTER CITY?
Coach Sven Goran Eriksson returned to English football but there is an apparent lack of concern about who is paying his wages. More, pages 12 & 72.

7 WHY WERE THE CROWDS SO BIG AT THE UNDER-20 WORLD CUP?
There were record attendances in Canada. More, page 28.

8 DID ANYBODY NOTICE AN ENGLISHMAN JOINING LOS ANGELES GALAXY?
David Beckham arrived in California as his new team struggled in the League. More, page 24.

9 CAN BAYERN MUNICH SPEND THEIR WAY BACK TO THE TOP IN GERMANY?
The Bundesliga's wealthiest club splashed out a record £50million in the transfer market. More, page 48.

10 WHAT'S IN STORE FOR JUVENTUS ON THEIR RETURN TO SERIE A?
The Old Lady is raring to go after a season in Serie B. More, page 36.

The BIG issue

What are the rights and wrongs of the Carlos Tevez affair?

What next?... Tevez

● David Gill, Manchester United chief executive
"The transfer has become over-complicated. Effectively, we are trying to work with four parties – the player, West Ham, the company who own Carlos's economic rights and the Premier League in order to sort it out. We are very confident this will be resolved in favour of the player and he will be free to achieve his wish of joining Manchester United. We hope by the time the new season kicks off, Carlos will be training at Carrington."

● Alex Ferguson, United manager
"I imagine it will be done before the [August 31] deadline, but we would wait for him anyway if we had to. We've gone so far, there's no point in stepping back. There are few strikers of that quality in the world market. I feel more confident now because his agent is confident enough to take it to the High Court. You can be embarrassed there if it's not right and you can lose everything. I thought it would have all been sorted by now. It must be the Premier League that is holding it up."

● Kia Joorabchian, Tevez's agent
"Personal terms between Carlos and United have been agreed in full. He feels confident now that he is a Manchester United player.

"Carlos is a little bit sad because he felt very attached to West Ham. Along with the other guys at the club, he helped get them out of the relegation battle; I think they did a fantastic job towards the end of the season.

"He's a sportsman, he doesn't really understand all the administrative bits and pieces, but he knows he's not in any way fighting with West Ham or demanding anything. He loved his time there and it was kind of mutually agreed he would be there for a year, and he was there for his year, he served his year."

● West Ham, club statement
"We will not be drawn into this form of public mudslinging but these latest statements from Kia Joorabchian cannot go unanswered. Mr Joorabchian entered into agreements with the previous regime at West Ham United at a time when he was attempting to take over the club. Those arrangements, since terminated by West Ham United, led the club into serious disciplinary difficulties, for which the club has paid a heavy price.

"The only contract relating to Carlos Tevez recognised by West Ham United and the Premier League is the player's four-year contract, which runs until June 2010. All other arrangements were terminated by West Ham on April 27, 2007, and no legal challenge to that termination has occurred."

● Pape Diouf, Marseille chairman
"The Tevez affair is a mess but that has much to do with the view held in England that third-party ownership of a player is basically wrong. The practice is everywhere in Brazil and Argentina, where cash-strapped clubs are the norm and businessmen are eager to jump into the breach. That's the reality in those parts of the world, and we have to deal with it."

● Klaus Allofs, Werder Bremen technical director
"The English have a right to fear that consortia who own professionals can lead to problems. Transparency is the only solution. That's why when we dealt with Corinthians and MSI for Carlos Alberto recently, the only way for us to go was to take up 100 per cent of the rights to the player. MSI no longer has any influence in the matter." ●

Continue the debate online at worldsoccer.com/forums

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FROM THE MESSAGE BOARDS

...on last month's "Greatest" vote

"Saeed Owairan's goal is there mainly because of the 'had-it-been-scored-by-a-better-known-player' effect. Hard to argue with that, but Ronaldo scored one of those solo goals for Barcelona against Compostela 10 years ago that was even featured in a TV ad. But this was before You Tube, which is why Leo Messi's goal is there."
Posted by "Rogorn", July 5

"Why is the Arsenal team from 2002 until 2004 not in the top 20 but Spurs from '61 are in? Arsenal broke domestic records when they won league titles both times, going unbeaten away from home, scoring in every league game, and the unbeaten season in 03-04. They should go down as one of the best English teams of all time."
Posted by "Henryfan1", July 6

"Sky Sports have been saying for years that Liverpool's 4-3 win over Newcastle United in 1996 is the greatest game of all time. Obviously, Sky would have you believe that before the Premier League was formed football didn't exist. In the real world it's obviously not the greatest game of all time, but to not include it in the top 20 is ridiculous."
Posted by "haweythetoon", July 6

"I was a bit disappointed to see no mention of the all-conquering 'Il Grande Torino' team, which was so tragically decimated in a plane crash in 1949. It would have been a good opportunity to bring their achievements to a wider audience."
Posted by "foxrocks", July 6

"Can't agree with many of the team selections. Holland '74? Wasn't it West Germany who won the World Cup that year? Brazil '82? See above point. Cruyff's Barcelona? Weren't they the ones who didn't touch the ball during the 1994 European Cup Final? Are France '84 and '98 and Denmark '86 better than, say, Argentina '78. And where are 'Il Grande Torino' and Penarol? As for the greatest matches, much better. But please don't tell me Liverpool's ridiculously unjust and almost entirely accidental six-minute pantomime comeback in the 2005 Champions League Final makes the game the second best ever. The best team didn't win. It was football at its worst, not its best."
Posted by "gilgillespie", July 8

Add your comments at worldsoccer.com/forum
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WHAT WE'VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

Problems...Adriano

● **Thabang Molefe**, the South Africa defender who broke David Beckham's wrist after a challenge during a friendly international four years ago, was charged with theft. He was accused of stealing a plasma screen, worth £1,000, from a house in Naturena, near Johannesburg.

● Internazionale striker **Adriano** turned to drink last season to cope with problems off the pitch. "After the death of my father and the break-up with Daniela [his girlfriend], I took refuge in alcohol," said the Brazilian, who lost his place in his national side after a series of minor injury setbacks.

● Japan's **Shunsuke Nakamura** had a secret formula for soothing his aches and pains during the Asian Cup. "I'm bathing in lots of different *onsen* [Japanese hot spring] minerals," said the Celtic midfielder. "We're in the hotel for long periods so you have to enjoy small creature comforts like bath-time. It's more fun getting in a bath with an interesting colour than plain water."

● French international forward **Sylvain Wiltord** was arrested at a Lyon training session for allegedly having failed to turn up at court to face speeding charges on three occasions.

● Italian full-back **Francesco Coco** had a lively holiday in the Sardinian resort of Porto Cervo. On leaving a disco, Coco and his girlfriend were confronted by a knife-wielding old flame of his, who fortunately was quickly disarmed.

● Hertha Berlin showed Dutch defender **Dick Van Burik** the door. Apparently his football agent brother Karel had been trying to sell young Hertha players to other clubs.

● Coach **Volker Finke** was so unhappy at being told he was no longer wanted at Freiburg after 16 years that he refused to return the keys to his office. The club had to change the locks.

● The powers that be in Sao Paulo sacked top female referee **Ana Paula de Oliveira** for posing without her whistle in a Brazilian edition of *Playboy*. ●

Poser...Ana Paula de Oliveira

Brian Glanville

...on Thaksin's shameful takeover at Manchester City...why Beckham's stint in the USA is unlikely to achieve what Pele failed to do...and a psychoanalytical view of soccer

Controversial...Thaksin

A FOUL AROMA emanates from Eastlands, home of Manchester City, permeating the atmosphere around Soho Square, the West End headquarters of the Greed Is Good League and, by extension, of English football at large. And still, as I write this, not a public word about the shameful takeover at the club either from Richard Scudamore of the Premier League or Brian Barwick of the FA.

In two articles of devastating detail, the *Sunday Times* has spoken out against the alarming record of Thaksin Shinawatra, a prime minister of Thailand until displaced by a military coup. The articles referred to his alleged embezzlements, which caused the new Thai government to freeze £1.1billion of his assets, but he was still able to buy up City for an estimated £81million. In the last issue I briefly spoke of this and about Thaksin's ferocious, lethal campaign against minor drug dealers. But alarming reports by Amnesty International, which seem to have been neither challenged nor rebutted, tell of shocking atrocities against political opponents, speaking of "credible reports of police ill-treating and torturing suspects in pre-trial detentions to extract confessions", of "widespread abuses in the administration of justice", of detainees being beaten to death or tortured with red-hot coals, Thaksin fostering "a climate of impunity that allows human rights violations to continue", of migrant workers denied basic human rights and the persecution of Thailand's hill tribe people, who face "discrimination with regard to education, healthcare and other basic rights".

It's all relative... "Posh" Spice has made her mark in the USA

None of this seems to have mattered to the City directors, who were only too desperately eager to take Thaksin's money, to those bone-headed fans, who have been publicly interviewed, and, abysmally, to Scudamore and Barwick.

A Labour MP, David Taylor, did remark in the Commons: "If he passes the test that he is a fit and proper person to own a football club, then the Premier League's rules must be too lax. He's a flaky foreign financier." If only this were all.

So the stain spreads to tarnish the game at large, so much so as to make even a journalist wonder whether, in continuing to cover a Premier League with such utter indifference to human suffering and chicanery, he is in some sense becoming himself an accessory after the fact.

IF THE incomparable Pele and his numerous fellow stars at New York Cosmos couldn't swing it for soccer in America, what hope has the vastly less gifted David Beckham at Los Angeles Galaxy, with their small stadium and a team that looks poor even in as mediocre a competition as MLS?

Next to none, I would say, and it still seems to me that he was daft to go there. I doubt if he would have agreed to do so had he waited a few months, but the deal was done when his career seemed in twilight, out of the Real Madrid side, abused both by club president Ramon Calderon and then coach Fabio Capello, and jettisoned from the England team by Steve McClaren after a disastrous World Cup, despite the handful of goals that that famous right foot engineered.

Since Galaxy appear already to have pocketed £5million through the sale of Beckham-endorsed gear, perhaps they are relaxed about it all. Their chief executive, Tim Leiweke, goes on about world tours and

believes untold thousands will be coming to watch a team that in show business parlance and in terms of the world game couldn't draw steam out of a kettle. The idea that fans in their thousands are longing to see the one-trick pony send in his howitzer shells from far out, never beat his man and never get to the line is risible.

You do wonder how much Relatively Posh Spice – oh God, the Spice Girls have risen from the tomb to tour again, and some people say there's a God! – had to do with Beckham's decision to play for Galaxy. All that hobnobbing with Tom Cruise and his wife. What can they possibly have in common? Can Cruise's hidden ambition be to convert them both to the cranky delusions of Scientology? And if he can't, how long will the liaison last?

Relatively Posh has now had the brass cheek to admonish the glittering girl stars of Hollywood for their tendency to stroll about in casual clothes rather than deck themselves, as she does her own skeletal frame, in different outfits each day. And now the Beckhams want to develop a chain of nightclubs in the USA? I'm fantasising surely. Or if I'm not, then they are.

CHRIS OAKLEY is a Hampstead psychoanalyst of renown, charm and humour who for many years played enthusiastically in minor football until a cruciate ligament injury ended his career. But he still travels the world watching the game and was in Venezuela to see Brazil win the Copa America.

Now he has published a highly original and stimulating book, *Soccer Delirium*, in which he tries to achieve what one might call a synthesis of soccer and psychoanalysis. The master and founder of the discipline, Sigmund Freud, is abundantly quoted. But then so is Bill Shankly.

Note that Chris is a psychoanalyst not a psychologist and, heaven forfend, a sports psychologist, one of whom followed England manager Steve McClaren around to no apparent purpose.

I remember the psychologist the Brazilians brought with them to the 1958 World Cup in Sweden, a small unshaven man in spectacles who wore grey jerseys and insisted that neither Pele nor Garrincha should play. "Senor Feola [the Brazil coach] isn't saying he wishes the psychologist would go to hell," said the interpreter at a press conference, "but he is thinking it." ●

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QUOTES & NOTES

Who said what and why

Dampener...Argentina coach Basile

"We'll win the Copa America if God wants it. And if he doesn't, we'll remind him that we are the best team anyway."
Argentina boss Alfio Basile on the eve of the tournament.

"I didn't want to expose my family to the media. So I refused the offer from Mr Abramovich."
Jurgen Klinsmann makes it clear that Chelsea were keen for him to take over from Jose Mourinho this summer.

"When Laurent has 10 years' experience of the transfer market he will be a little less definitive in his reasoning."
Bordeaux chairman Jean-Louis Triaud slaps down new coach Laurent Blanc for complaining about a lack of new signings.

"I want to experience things here that I never did at Gladbach – away wins, for example."
New Bayern Munich full-back Marcell Jansen gives his reasons for looking forward to the new campaign.

"I need a coach who respects the artistic heritage of this club."
Real Madrid president Ramon Calderon explains why Fabio Capello had to go.

"I'll look straight at them without lowering my head for an instant."
Italy defender Marco Materazzi predicts his reaction when meeting France in the Euro 2008 qualifiers, the first time he will have played against them since being butted by Zinedine Zidane in the World Cup Final.

"I just wasn't interested in going to a third-rate team in England."
Djibril Cisse explains why he signed a permanent deal with Marseille after being declared surplus to requirements at Liverpool.

"In Europe I've learned a different way of playing, not to hang on so long to the ball."
Robinho explains the reduction in stepovers.

"It's a case of four players for three positions. It will be difficult to maintain a balance."
Johan Cruyff on the challenge facing Barcelona now that Thierry Henry has joined Ronaldinho, Samuel Eto'o and Lionel Messi.

Balance...Barca's treble tops

HEADLINERS

People in the news...on and off the pitch

Sergio Aguero
Star of his side's Under-20 World Cup triumph in Canada

ARGENTINA

MAJOR SERGIO AGUERO, the three weeks in Canada at the Under-20 World Cup could not have gone any better. His goal in the Final against the Czech Republic spurred Argentina on to victory, he finished top scorer and was named player of the tournament.

Last season, Aguero failed to live up to high expectations at Atletico Madrid following his transfer from Independiente for a reported £12million. But his performances in Canada were a dramatic confirmation of his wonderful talent. His six goals included a magical strike against Poland that was reminiscent of Pele's goal against Sweden in the 1958 World Cup Final.

In the Final, Aguero, captain in the absence of the suspended Matias Cahais, scored Argentina's equaliser two minutes after Martin Fenin had put the Czechs ahead on the hour. Mauro Zarate grabbed a late winner to bring Argentina their fifth victory in the last seven editions of the Under-20 event.

The win was a personal triumph for Hugo Tocalli, Argentina's youth team supremo since 2003. He picked out Aguero and midfielder Maximiliano Moralez for particular praise, saying: "I form players, I mould players. They are both growing in the world of football. They will make the full national team without doubt and they will play at the highest level."

Aguero was selected as the player of the tournament by the accredited media, with Moralez second and Mexico's Giovanni Dos Santos third. He thus followed in the footsteps of compatriot Lionel Messi, who won the accolade two years ago when Argentina won the trophy in Holland.

The South Americans' toughest game was against Mexico in the quarter-finals. It was settled just before half-time when Moralez's drive was deflected in off Mexican defender Julio Cesar Dominguez.

Notable performance...Giovanni Dos Santos finished third in the player of the tournament poll

On top...Argentina carry off the trophy

In the semi-finals, Argentina swept past Chile, who finished with only nine men. The first of Argentina's goals in the 3-0 win was scored by Angel Di Maria, who looks set to join Arsenal, though he will be "parked" at Spanish side Salamanca, alongside another Arsenal player, Mexican teenager Carlos Vela, while work permit issues are resolved.

Brazil, one of the favourites, struggled through the group stage, despite the presence of much-heralded striker Alexandre Pato. They lost their opening game against Poland, 1-0, and almost threw away a 3-0 lead against South Korea, winning 3-2. A 2-1 defeat to the USA, inspired by Freddy Adu, in their final group game meant Brazil finished only third in the group, and faced Spain in the first knockout round. In one of the most exciting games of the tournament, the Spanish came from 2-0 down to win 4-2 after extra-time.

Spain had been expected to lead the European challenge in Canada, but despite impressive performances from Real Madrid forward Juan Manuel Mata and the prolific Adrian Lopez of Deportivo La Coruna, they were edged out in the quarter-finals by the Czech Republic following a penalty shoot-out. The Czechs thus went into an all-European semi against Austria, surprise winners over the United States.

The African countries started strongly, Nigeria, Zambia, Congo and Gambia all getting through their groups. But all but Nigeria, who saw off Zambia, exited in the first knockout round. The Nigerians succumbed to four extra-time goals from Chile in the quarter-finals.

John Holmesdale

● *See also Dispatches, page 28*

Award-winning...Aguero was top scorer and took the best player prize

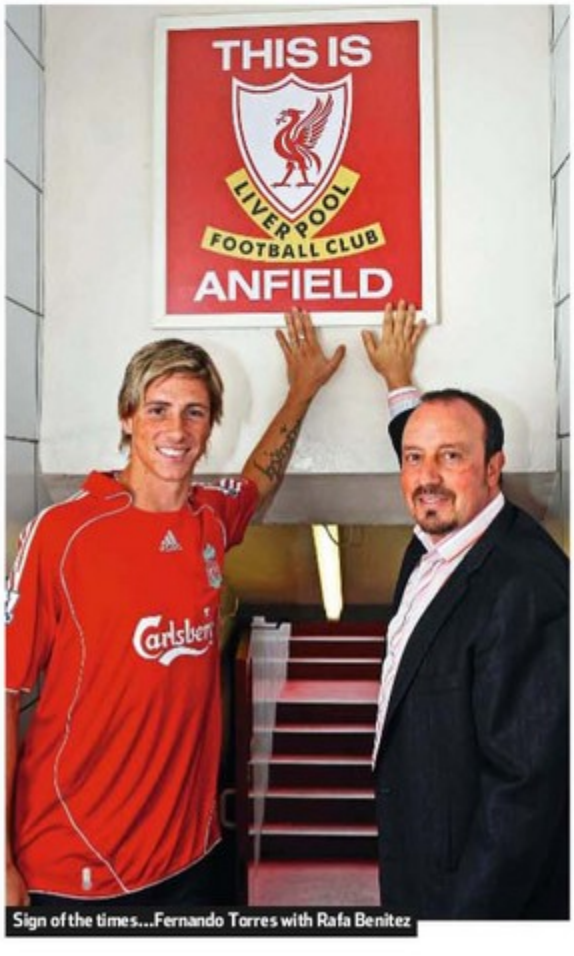
Fernando Torres
Record deal for Spanish striker tops Premiership spending spree

ENGLAND

THE £22MILLION deal that took Fernando Torres to Liverpool from Atletico Madrid was the biggest in a summer of record spending by English Premier League clubs and the highest fee ever paid by the Anfield outfit. Buoyed by a lucrative new television deal and extra investment from new owners, the clubs had spent almost £400m on new players by the end of July. Then there was the £30m that champions Manchester United were reportedly prepared to pay for Carlos Tevez in a transfer that was heading for legal arbitration at the time of writing.

Atletico received no shortage of offers for Torres, who cut short his holiday in Polynesia to return to Madrid to explain his move to the fans before travelling to Liverpool.

"Atletico had better offers and the player had better offers," said Liverpool manager Rafa Benitez. "But he always wanted to join Liverpool. He has taken a pay cut to come here. OK, he is still on a very good contract, because he is a top player. But to be a successful club you need players with passion, and Fernando has passion."



Sign of the times...Fernando Torres with Rafa Benitez

Serious contender...Metzelder is determined to do well in a defence where so many have failed

Christoph Metzelder
Another German aiming for success at Real Madrid

SPAIN

GERMANS HAVE A winning record at Real Madrid. But new signing Christoph Metzelder, at the heart of the defence, and compatriot new coach Bernd Schuster face a daunting task.

Madrid have gone through 18 coaches over the past 25 years, and almost twice as many central defenders. During that period, only five centre-backs have topped 100 league games – Manuel Sanchis (523), Fernando Hierro (439), Ivan Helguera (229), Rafael Alkorta (107) and Francisco Pavon (106) – and all of them also played in other positions.

Metzelder has arrived for free after the expiry of his contract with Borussia Dortmund. That is probably just as well since Madrid have wasted around £75million on central defenders in the past three years, including homesick (for Italy) Argentinian Walter Samuel and injury-prone Englishman Jonathan Woodgate, who managed only 39 league games between them.

Now a further £20m has been splashed on Pepe from Porto, who has far less big-match experience than Metzelder. The German's intention is to follow the trophy-winning examples of compatriots at Real such as Gunter Netzer (two leagues and two cups), Paul Breitner (one league, two cups), Uli Stielike (one UEFA Cup, three leagues, two cups), Bodo Illgner (one World Club Cup, one European Cup, two leagues) and Schuster, as a player (two leagues, two cups).

The 26-year-old made a perfect start, answering questions at his presentation press conference in Spanish to prove he has done his homework and show he is serious about succeeding where almost everyone else has failed (that includes, thus far, world player of the year Fabio Cannavaro). "I am thrilled at the way everything has worked out," Metzelder said. "It's a dream. I won the Bundesliga with Dortmund in 2002, I played in the World Cup Final in 2002 and the semi-finals in 2006, and now I am achieving a mixture of both by joining a club on the world stage.

"I know all about Madrid's reputation for playing attacking football and I know that is how Bernd Schuster wants us to play. That can create a lot of hard work for defenders, but that's OK. I'm quite flattered to understand that I am the first signing of the summer, though I know that means nothing out on the pitch."

Keir Radnedge

Good bargain?...Haristeas' £1.3m fee will look cheap if he gets goals

Angelos Haristeas
Greek hero taking up new challenge

GERMANY

NOT MUCH HAS gone right for Angelos Haristeas since the greatest day of his career, when he scored the winning goal for rank outsiders Greece against hosts Portugal in the Euro 2004 Final.

At the time he was with Werder Bremen, for whom he had appeared only intermittently and scored 18 goals in 66 games. His new-found fame brought a move to Ajax in January 2005 and then Feyenoord.

Haristeas scored nine goals in 28 games last term, but the Rotterdam club slipped far behind rivals PSV Eindhoven and Ajax. This summer's capture of Roy Makaay from Bayern Munich was the writing on the De Kuip walls.

"Going to Ajax was a waste of time and, at first, the Feyenoord fans were against me because I had come from the enemy," the Greek says. "But I think my performances won them round."

Now he is starting from scratch yet again in the Bundesliga with cup-holders Nurnberg, but has received an encouraging welcome from coach Hans Meyer: "He's just what we need – an international-class centre-forward who speaks German." Nurnberg have paid Feyenoord £1.3million, which could prove a bargain if Haristeas helps to fire them a long way in the UEFA Cup and to an improvement on last season's sixth-place finish in the League.

Keir Radnedge

Boudewijn Zenden
Dutch winger heads south to Marseille

FRANCE

THE PURSUIT OF a new challenge has taken 31-year-old Boudewijn Zenden to Marseille, where he hopes to play more league matches in his first season than the 23 he amassed in his entire injury-hit two years at Liverpool.

"Some Italian and Dutch clubs showed an interest when it became known I was leaving Anfield," the Dutch winger said. "But once you get a taste for playing in the Champions League – like last season with Liverpool – then you want to be with a club who are in it."

French international forward Djibril Cisse had a big role to play in luring the polyglot Zenden to Marseille, where he will wear the coveted No 10 shirt. "I've been talking a lot to him," Zenden said. "I'd got on well with him at Liverpool, and he gave me a very positive view of Marseille and the fans."

Keir Radnedge

European appeal...Zenden has the Champions League bug

GOOD MONTH FOR...

Triumphant...Dunga

Lawyers...
Manchester United's attempts to sign Carlos Tevez from West Ham ended in legal wrangles, so there is one certain winner.

Dunga...
The pragmatic approach of Brazil's coach triumphed over the romanticism of Argentina's Alfio Basile in the Copa America Final.

BAD MONTH FOR...

Clash...Chile's Under-20s

Chile's Under-20s...
They clashed with police and officials after their semi-final defeat by Argentina at the World Cup in Canada.

Freddie Shepherd...
Sacked as Newcastle chairman by new owner Mike Ashley.

Roy Keane...
Frustrated in his attempts to sign players for promoted Sunderland.

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Super power

The winning habit...Brazil's players celebrate their Copa America triumph, adding yet another trophy to their bulging collection

Brazilian strength overcame Argentinian artistry in the Final of the Copa America, a tournament that was a watershed for the game in Venezuela

TIM VICKERY
in Maracaibo

IT WAS BRAZIL'S Copa from the moment in the semi-final shoot-out that the kick from Uruguay's Pablo Garcia thudded against their left post. Five centimetres to the right and he would have booked his side's place in the Final against Argentina, leaving Brazil to fly home to tomatoes or, at best, indifference. Instead, Brazil seized their lifeline with no looking back.

In the Final they were ahead from the first attack. True, the breaks went their way; Juan Roman Riquelme immediately hit a post for Argentina, whose captain, Roberto Ayala, effectively sealed the destiny of the title with an own goal five minutes before half-time.

But as the Argentina camp acknowledged, Brazil were better on the day. The Argentinians, who had played their way attractively past all previous opponents, could make little headway against a rugged Brazilian midfield. And they were unable to cope with the physical power and the pace on the break of Dunga's team.

Argentina versus Brazil is a match that has almost become like time travel, the old against the new. Argentina are an old-fashioned passing side, who run against the game's current tendency towards ever greater athleticism.

It is a style that Brazil, their faith shaken by Holland in 1974, abandoned altogether after the failure to win the World Cups of 1982 and 1986.

Brazil's technocratic coaches concluded that the physical and tactical development of the game had rendered such football obsolete. Victims of what they dubbed the "power football" of the Europeans, they set about imitating it; their players got bigger and stronger, key positions in central midfield were filled by battlers instead of the generals of old. Mixed in with elements of their own tradition – attacking full-backs and flashes of breathtaking individual talent – it is a formula that has delivered yet another title for their bulging trophy cabinet.

Robinho was named best player of this latest triumph. True, he finished as top scorer, but perhaps a better choice would have been Julio Baptista. The introduction of "The Beast" improved the side, bringing striker Vagner Love into play. And in each of the three knockout games Baptista both scored and set up goals.

> "Now Dunga, bolstered by victory, can prepare for 2010 with the pressure off – for the moment at least"

Opportunity taken

The hulking Baptista is a symbol of the physical strength of the current Brazil team, but also a symbol of their strength in depth. Had Kaka and Ronaldinho answered the call, then Baptista would probably not even have been in Venezuela. But Baptista took his opportunity so well that he must be in contention for a first-team place when World Cup qualification starts later this year.

That said, Brazil would be unwise to read too much into their convincing win in the Final. The fact is that Argentina v Brazil has become a most untypical match. Argentina are the only side who think about playing their way through Brazil before they think about marking. Pragmatists would argue that, again and again, they play into the hands of the Brazilian counter-attack.

Now Dunga, bolstered by victory, can prepare for 2010 with the pressure off – for the moment at least. Argentina have fewer comforts. A year ago they could reassure themselves with "if onlys" about their quarter-final exit at the World Cup, against Germany – if Riquelme had not been subbed, if Lionel Messi had come on. Now there is no hiding place for them.

For the time being, Alfio Basile's project of patient, passing football remains intact, and with midfielders such as Fernando Gago and Ever Banega coming

through, there is no lack of players to put the intentions into practice. But the Brazil game exposed a need for more power. Hernan Crespo was missed up front, yet will soon need replacing, as will Ayala, who will not look back on the Final with any pleasure. Fellow defenders Gabriel Milito and Gabriel Heinze were also exposed by the sheer athleticism of the Brazil attack.

Argentina, then, are likely to regroup while maintaining their identity. But plenty of other countries come out of the Copa with doubts about the way forward.

Uruguay, for example, were unlucky not to reach the Final. But their good showing came only after they had quickly abandoned their big project – 4-3-3 with two wingers – in favour of a five-man midfield with no wingers.

Colombia arrived with an idea of being more "European" and were soon sent packing. Their first conquerors, Paraguay, probably wished they had never made it into the quarter-finals after their astonishing collapse against Mexico. Coach Gerardo Martino's attempts to get the team higher up the pitch go against the grain since Paraguay's defensive line is always happier close to its own goal. After the early sending-off of goalkeeper Aldo Bobadilla against the Mexicans the defence was never sure whether it should push up or sit deep, and the result was a rout.

Another disaster

Chile's qualification for the last eight also ended in disaster. Senior players provoked yet another scandal by over-indulging in the celebrations. It led to long bans for those involved, while coach Nelson Acosta resigned after his side, riven by internal problems, fell apart against Brazil.

Peru, whose coach Julio Cesar Uribe was later sacked, had some joy with the pace and power of their strikers. But a team effectively playing five centre-backs had their lack of quality brutally exposed by Argentina in the quarter-finals.

Bolivia and Ecuador failed to get out of their group but, paradoxically, can perhaps look back on the tournament with more pleasure than some who did. Bolivia played their best football for some time, but must learn to deal with the ball played high into their box. And Ecuador lost all their matches despite a level of performance comparable to the one that was good enough to take them into the last 16 of the World Cup last summer. They missed Agustin Delgado's ability to produce a goal from nothing, but although they left Venezuela without a point, they had the respect of their opponents.

As for the two guest sides, Mexico were once again highly impressive – tactically sound and good in possession, with Nery Castillo giving them a potent threat. They looked capable of getting back on level terms with Argentina in the semi-final until Messi's wondergoal put his side 2-0 up on the way to a 3-0 final score. The United States sent a young, under-strength side, leaving their football public in a heated debate about whether the experience gained was worth the defeats suffered.

And then there were the hosts. Venezuela ended their 40-year wait for a second Copa America win. But the pressure of the expectations took its toll, and as coach Richard Paez acknowledged, they were unable to find their best form. Off the field there were occasional excesses of heavy-handed authoritarianism and the infuriating bureaucracy that so bedevils the region. In general, though, the Venezuelans were charming hosts, though their internal divisions did make their presence felt. The Hugo Chavez government saw the tournament as a showcase for its achievements, while for the opposition it was a chance to protest. The Brazil-Uruguay semi-final was switched from Caracas to Maracaibo (leaving the third-place play-off as the capital's only game) almost certainly because the planned host stadium stands in the grounds of Caracas' university, frequently a scene of political unrest. Some of the other games turned into political demonstrations. At the Argentina-Colombia group match in Maracaibo artificial crowd noise was piped in to drown out the chanting. For the semi-final at the same venue it appears many tickets were handed out to government supporters in order to avoid a repeat.

> **"From a footballing point of view, the most significant aspect of the Copa was perhaps the investment it provoked"**

Crowd pleaser...the Venezuelans turned out in their thousands

From a footballing point of view, perhaps the most significant aspect of the Copa was the investment it provoked. It was the most ambitious Copa ever, with nine cities used and three new stadiums built. The grounds at Maturin and Barquisimeto were not strictly completed but the latter, in particular, is a jewel, a compact, English-style stadium. FIFA president Sepp Blatter complimented Venezuela on its new footballing infrastructure, adding that the country can now think about staging a youth world cup.

The lack of hotels was a problem, and the transport network leaves much to be desired. Public transport is a common South American weak point, exacerbated in Venezuela by the fact that cheap petrol makes car ownership relatively economical, thus snaring cities in gridlock.

On the plus side, the Venezuelan public demonstrated a hunger for football. Crowds at some recent Copas have been sparse. In Venezuela, the grounds were usually full.

The attempt to sell tickets on the internet was a failure – thousands were not delivered and there were chaotic scrums on the eve or the day of matches because supporters had not received all the tickets they had paid for. Yet that underlined the fact that so many people wanted to see the action.

But here comes the big question: what happens to the infrastructure now that the party is over?

The gleaming Metropolitano stadium in Barquisimeto is an appropriate symbol for the doubts and opportunities surrounding post-Copa Venezuelan football. The ground is a long trek outside the town. The people flocked to its impressive seats to watch Riquelme and Messi. But will they endure the traffic and the trudge on a weekly basis to see Guaros and Union Lara, the two local sides in Venezuela's newly expanded first division? ●

See page 84 for Brian Homewood's stage-by-stage tournament review

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Prize guy...Beckham's arrival in MLS has helped boost ticket sales even in blase New York, but he has work to do to lift LA Galaxy

Galaxy in a spin

The struggling Los Angeles team are banking on Beckham to turn their season around

PAUL GARDNER
in New York

THE FIRST HALF of the Major League Soccer season has followed a decidedly unusual path. The 13 teams have had to endure the disruptions resulting from national team demands on their players for no fewer than three major international tournaments – the CONCACAF Gold Cup, the Copa America (in which the USA played as a guest team), and the Under-20 World Cup.

The Gold Cup was particularly troublesome. An attempt was clearly made by the US federation to spread the burden equally among the clubs. But Canada were also at the tournament, meaning that champions Houston Dynamo were deprived of Dwayne De Rosario and Pat Onstadt, as well as US players Ricardo Clark and Brian Ching, for three games. Yet Dynamo won all of them, including a 4-0 thrashing of Chivas USA, who were missing only two players. "Sometimes it's more difficult to play against young guys coming off the bench," was the rueful comment of Chivas coach Preki.

Up in Canada, MLS has had a huge success with the new Toronto FC – not so much on the field, where the team won only five of their first 16 games – but in the enthusiasm of the fans, who filled the new, 20,000-capacity BMO Field for each game.

At the halfway point, the top teams were New England Revolution and Kansas City Wizards in the Eastern Conference, Houston and FC Dallas in the Western. But pre-season favourites DC United and New York Red Bulls were only a point behind the leaders in the East. New York, with former national team coach Bruce Arena in charge, had taken full advantage of the League's new designated-player rule, signing first Claudio Reyna from Manchester City and then Juan Pablo Angel from Aston Villa. Angel proved an immediate success, scoring nine goals in his first 11 games.

But the two most talked about designated players had yet to arrive: Mexican Cuauhtemoc Blanco at Chicago Fire and David Beckham at Los Angeles Galaxy. Both were urgently needed because the clubs were in trouble, Chicago in last place in the East, Galaxy next to last in the West. Blanco was set to meet up with a new coach, Fire having axed the man who signed him, Dave Sarachan. His replacement is Juan Carlos Osorio, who has experience at Manchester City and Colombian club Millonarios. He is the League's second Hispanic coach, alongside Fernando Clavijo of Colorado Rapids.

MLS deputy commissioner Ivan Gazidis declared "MLS is committed to promoting diversity among its technical staff", and announced an initiative under which all clubs making coaching appointments, at whatever level, have to submit a list of candidates to the league office, to demonstrate that they are including "minority" groups in their search.

Canadian Frank Yallop is the coach at Galaxy, though the team's poor record suggests his position may be shaky – particularly if things do not improve after Beckham's arrival. Yallop's previous coaching stint in MLS was a highly successful three seasons with San Jose Earthquakes, during which the team won the 2001 and 2003 championships. That is a far cry from his time at Galaxy. The club were champions when he took charge in 2006, but they failed to even make the play-offs in his first season and are up against it to make it this time round.

Yallop has been shedding old players and acquiring new ones on an almost weekly basis. Two major signings have been Portuguese defender Abel Xavier and Honduran striker Carlos Pavon, with Canadian defender Ante Jazic and former US national team midfielder Chris Klein also arriving. Jamaican defender Tyrone Marshall and midfielder Santino Quaranta (hailed only two years ago as the next American teenage star) have been offloaded.

Utterly inconsistent

The changes – on paper at least – look like improvements. Yallop now has the experienced "spine" so beloved of coaches – goalkeeper Joe Cannon, Xavier, midfielder Landon Donovan and Pavon. But the team do not seem to get any better. They remain utterly inconsistent, and by the halfway stage had won only three of their games, none of them against a top team.

Beckham was thus joining a club waiting for him to turn their season around. In reality, things were not quite as bad as they seemed, for Galaxy had played only 12 games, four or five fewer than most of the other MLS teams. That situation resulted from the Beckham factor since the League had reshuffled the fixture list to make sure that Galaxy played most of their games in the second half of the season, after Beckham had joined.

Galaxy, then, will have a crowded schedule between July and October – made even more crowded because the team will be taking part in the SuperLiga, a mini-tournament organised by MLS featuring four of its top teams (Galaxy, DC United, Houston and Dallas) against four top Mexican teams (America, Guadalajara, Pachuca and Morelia), all the games to be played in the stadiums of the MLS clubs.

The schedule changes to maximise Beckham's presence make a lot of sense, for if there is one thing that his arrival has proved it is that crowds will turn out to see him. Even in blase New York, Red Bulls, whose home crowds rarely get above 10,000, announced that over 30,000 tickets had been sold one month before Beckham and Galaxy were scheduled to play at Giants stadium. ●

> "Coach Yallop has been shedding old players and acquiring new ones on an almost weekly basis, but the team do not get any better"

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Walking tall...Wenger's close bond with the Arsenal faithful raises eyebrows in France, where he is seen as a rather remote figure

The Wenger enigma

Arsenal's manager will survive the loss of Thierry Henry but will he ever be loved by his countrymen?

GIVE A EURO to Arsene Wenger for every time the expression "the French connection" has been used in relation to Arsenal and he'd probably have enough money to buy another of his "wonderkids".

Arsenal have become an honorary French club, or so I've heard on many occasions from compatriots of mine; and if you wish to have proof of this, here is one bit of evidence: earlier this year my magazine, *France Football*, commissioned a polling institute to gauge the popularity of foreign clubs in France. The Gunners finished only just behind top-rated Real Madrid, with Milan, Juventus, Liverpool and Manchester United lagging well behind.

The appeal of Arsenal's playing style cannot alone explain why a London club which was, at best, considered with indifference before Wenger arrived should now inspire such devotion. In fact, when Arsenal were talked about, it usually was in less than flattering terms: the dire battles fought by George Graham sides against Paris Saint-Germain and Auxerre were hard to forget and harder to forgive.

How dramatically things can change: the dent caused to Arsenal's status by the departure of Thierry Henry will be no more than superficial, provided that the team do not suffer a calamitous collapse next season. For one thing, Henry, popular as he is with advertisers, has never caught the imagination or tugged the heartstrings of the French quite like Zinedine Zidane did. His perceived aloofness grates with a significant number of his countrymen, who also reproach him for his perceived failure to light up truly important occasions.

Wenger's imprint has the mark of permanence, or what can pass for such in the football world. In that, he stands alone in the history of French club managers; Albert Batteux, Guy Roux and Coco Suaudeau, all of them legends at Reims, Auxerre and Nantes respectively, never even tried to impose themselves on another country, let alone England.

To a majority of Frenchmen, Wenger is a source of great pride, the "pioneer" who proved that "our" managers did not have to coach the national team of one of France's former African colonies to be successful abroad; the "professor" who taught the English a thing or two about the game they'd invented (how sweet is that?); and the "alchemist" who turned Henry, Patrick Vieira, Emmanuel Petit and Robert Pires into world and/or European champions.

But Wenger, and consequentially Arsenal, have their critics too. To them, the coach is the almost-traitor who ruled himself out when given the chance to manage France, the vampire who bled and keeps bleeding the French League of its best young talent, without consideration for the impact it might have on the competition or on the players themselves.

His work as a pundit for TF1, France's most popular television network, has done very little to dim his (totally unjustified) reputation of being remote; and the numerous spats he's had with the French federation about the release of his international players for friendlies have eroded the credit he enjoyed with the supporters and journalists for whom club comes a distant second to country in the loyalty stakes.

First-time French visitors to the Emirates stadium, and Highbury before that, are often surprised that the emotional bond he shares with Arsenal fans should be so manifest; to them, Wenger is to be admired, respected or quarrelled with; but liked, loved even? In fact, has he ever been "one of us"? Wenger has not managed a side based in France since 1987; Monaco, where he worked from that year until 1994, may play in the French League but the fact they are based in the principality means they are viewed with a mixture of wariness, resentment and envy by French clubs who do not enjoy the advantage of operating from a tax haven.

It could be said that Wenger has been an outsider from the start and that his exiles in Japan and then England have merely confirmed that he is "a man of the border", a phrase I've heard him use more than once, sometimes with a hint of self-satisfaction. But this footballing vagabond is also quick to establish deep roots wherever he's given a chance to do so – not in a country, in a club. He left Monaco because he was sacked by a myopic board; he left Nagoya Grampus Eight because his contract had expired and he could not ignore a proposal to coach in England; nearly 11 years on, and whatever the papers might say, he is not leaving Arsenal.

In France, where management contracts are signed and torn up in revolving doors, such staying power and loyalty have added to Wenger's mystique and to the attraction of his club. What's more, most French football supporters do feel some degree of inadequacy when they compare themselves to their English counterparts; the regret that there is almost a complete absence of a "club culture" in France has contributed to the view of Wenger and Arsenal as objects of fantasy.

The loss of Henry will not endanger this relationship in the short term. In any case, fewer and fewer people believe that his departure will prove more detrimental to the club than to himself; no one is in any doubt that Wenger let the reins loose on his thoroughbred because he felt that it would not be so long before he'd be heading for the knacker's yard.

Another generation of French footballers is already being groomed at the London Colney training ground; Abou Diaby owes his first senior cap to Wenger's faith in his talent, and it shouldn't be too long before Gael Clichy and Bakary Sagna follow suit. The Arsenal connection – with France – lives on, and will do so for as long as Wenger feels at home at the club he has reinvented from A to Z; that is to say, for quite some time to come. ●

Philippe Auclair is the London correspondent of France Football *magazine*

PHILIPPE AUCLAIR in London

> "It could be said he has always been an outsider and that his exiles in Japan and England have confirmed he is a 'man of the border'"

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High point...Canada's opening game against Chile attracted a 20,000 capacity crowd at Toronto's National soccer stadium, which stands in the shadow of the CN Tower

Boom time

The record crowds at the Under-20 World Cup reflect the fact that Canadian soccer is finally going places

ONE HAS TO wonder why a country with such a reputation for openness to the world finds itself so behind on the international soccer scene. Yet after Canada's successful hosting of the Under-20 World Cup, it is clear the Great White North has turned the corner.

Canadians made FIFA's choice of venue look good. The event attracted a record attendance – almost 1.2 million paid to get in, breaking the mark of 1.15 million set by Mexico in 1983. In addition, all 52 games had excellent ratings on national television. "I believe this could be the tipping point of the future of this sport here in Canada," says former Canadian international keeper Craig Forest.

Of the six host cities, Montreal used the event best, to confirm its place as Canada's soccer capital. The Olympic stadium had a crowd of 55,800 for the opening double-header – Poland's surprise 1-0 defeat of Brazil, and South Korea's 1-1 draw with the United States. In all, the nine-game programme at the "Big O" attracted 350,000 spectators, thus resurrecting a venue that soccer had abandoned in 1983 when Montreal Manic dropped out of the now-defunct North American Soccer League. Even professional baseball left the premises three summers ago, and the local professional gridiron side ventures into the mammoth arena only once or twice a year for big play-off games.

The large crowds signify a changing of the guard on the sports scene, once dominated by the national sport of ice-hockey. "We just proved that there is an interested population, that there is a stadium ready to be filled and rumbled when the circus is in town," says Francis Millien, president of the Montreal organising committee.

The Canadian soccer story of the past 10 years has been the exponential growth of the recreational wing of the sport, while the lack of organisation at the elite level has driven Canada-bred players such as Owen Hargreaves (England) and Jonathan De Guzman (Holland) to leave club and country and bloom under foreign skies.

Canada has no national sports league of its own apart from the Canadian Football League, and even that eight-team gridiron circuit has a tumultuous and unstable history. In basketball, baseball, soccer, lacrosse and even ice-hockey, Canadian professional clubs rely on US-dominated North American leagues.

"While the addition of Toronto FC [to Major League Soccer] is a move in the right direction, it is not enough without expansion into Vancouver and Montreal," says former Canadian international Paul James. Toronto FC posted the second best average attendance figure, 20,000, in the first half of the MLS season, and league commissioner Don Garber is reportedly using the club as a model for future expansion, with Vancouver next in line. The latter city is home to the Whitecaps club, who have been playing in the United Soccer Leagues first division (roughly equivalent to a North American second tier of football) for the past 14 years. Vancouver hosted seven capacity-crowd Under-20 games in the cosy Swangard stadium. Whitecaps have already held discussions with MLS to join in 2010, when the construction of the breathtaking Waterfront stadium will be completed.

Neighbouring city Victoria also rekindled life in a forgotten venue – the 10,000-seater Royal Athletic Park, which hosted six Under-20 matches. Talks have begun to purchase the rights to operate a USLFD soccer franchise, from as early as next spring.

Big Impact

Montreal Impact, one of the top USLFD sides over the past few seasons, have been riding the popularity wave. They attract average crowds of 10,500 to a 9,000-seater stadium (the overspill sit on the running track). Impact also enjoy national television and radio coverage, and have a growing press corps that follow the club around the country, a rarity in North American soccer. The club are set for a move next spring to the new Saputo stadium, a stone's throw from the Big O. They are expected to join MLS within five years.

There were only two negatives from the Under-20 event. First, the Canadian squad made a very poor impression. Before a full house of 20,000 at Toronto's National soccer stadium, the hosts were humiliated 3-0 in their opening game by an inspired Chilean team, who went on to finish third. The Junior Canucks lost both their other group games, still without scoring, at the huge Commonwealth stadium in Edmonton before disappointing crowds. A few years ago, a pointless, goalless showing by a national soccer team might have gone unnoticed. Not now. John Browne, a columnist on St John's paper *The Telegram*, wrote: "The Canadian Soccer Association said it plans a 'comprehensive review of Canada's early exit'. A comprehensive review? I'll save you some time and money: We suck."

The other negative was the Toronto police's fight with the Chilean team following their violent semi-final with Argentina. Police chief Bill Blair said his officers had stepped in after a Chilean player began arguing with an Argentinian fan as the teams left the pitch. The incident had a diplomatic twist, with Chile's state president asking Canada to apologise for the fight, after which a number of Chilean players were handcuffed and detained at the stadium for hours. Chile had had two men sent off in the 3-0 loss, which featured 53 fouls.

The fighting was, in the words of FIFA president Sepp Blatter, "a black mark", but it did not mar a highly successful tournament in terms of attendance, media coverage and the future prosperity of the beautiful game in Canada.

FIFA and the CSA were quite prophetic when choosing the slogan for the tournament: "It's gonna be huge." The catchy phrase is bound to resonate in Canada long after the memory of Argentina's victory over the Czech Republic in the Final has begun to fade. ●

PHILIPPE GERMAIN
in Montreal

> "We just proved that there is an interested population, a stadium ready to be filled and rumbled when the circus is in town"
>
> *Montreal's organising committee president Francis Millien*

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In line for defeat...Malaysia (in yellow and black) try to see off an Iran attack but eventually succumbed to exit the finals without a point

Shock to the system

The four-way hosting of the Asian Cup brought the expected problems but Malaysia, who suffered worst on and off the pitch, may have received just the jolt they need

WHEN THE Asian Cup hosting rights were handed to a quartet of south-east Asian nations in 2004 the talk was of lasting legacies and spreading the football gospel. While the sport has deep roots in the region, seldom have Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam or Malaysia been able to boast of being the focus of the regional game in an era dominated by the big west and east Asian countries.

The four co-hosts are from a part of the continent more renowned for footballing scandal than success, and the initial idea was to wipe the slate clean and give these nations the chance to express themselves on the continental stage while seeing first-hand – and hopefully learning from – the advances made by such countries as Japan, South Korea and Iran.

But as the idealism started to fade and the practicalities clouded the vision, the doubts crept in. Asian confederation president Mohamed Bin Hammam publicly voiced his uncertainty about the wisdom of the hosting decision in the months leading up to the competition. "At the beginning of our term we were idealistic," he said earlier this year. "We wanted to give everyone a chance to host this event and give people the chance to enjoy the tournament. But one country is more appropriate in terms of logistics. Dealing with one national association and one government, it's like dealing with one mind."

Four hosts meant four local organising committees, four governments, four currencies and four legal systems, and the expected complications did, in fact, arise. There were problems with accreditation, hotels and the quality of the training facilities offered to teams, and the Saudi Arabia-South Korea group game suffered a 25-minute power cut. As for the logistics, they were always going to be an issue once the tournament reached the knockout phase and teams were required to travel between the four far-flung venues. Flights from Jakarta to Hanoi, for example, often require connections through Kuala Lumpur or Singapore, adding to the travel time – hardly ideal preparation for teams.

Iraq coach Jorvan Vieira was one of the many to complain, blasting organisers after his team were forced to wait four hours to get into their hotel rooms in Kuala Lumpur ahead of their semi-final against South Korea. "This is considered a high-level competition so this sort of mistake should not happen," the Brazilian fumed. "This is a football team playing in an important tournament, not a tourist group."

The tournament was not all doom and gloom. For instance, the attendances at some venues were encouraging. Thai supporters turned out in droves in Bangkok for their nation's group stage clash with Australia despite the fact that heavy seasonal rains lashed the Rajamangala stadium, though the locals were less enthusiatic about other games, preferring to stay indoors in the dry and watch on television.

The My Dinh stadium in Hanoi was packed for all three of Vietnam's group games as they surprised everyone by progressing to the quarter-finals.

Indonesia, too, was a success when the home side were in action, with sell-out crowds of 90,000 creating an electric atmosphere at Jakarta's imposing Gelora Bung Karno stadium.

But Malaysia was a big let-down, both in terms of local interest and the performance of the team. Fans stayed away from the cavernous Bukit Jalil stadium – built for Kuala Lumpur's hosting of the 1998 Commonwealth Games – even when the hosts were in action. Admittedly, expectations were not high – Malaysia were the lowest-ranked side of the 16 participants – but the team never showed any sign of exceeding them. Heavy defeats to China and Uzbekistan in their first two games effectively put them out of the tournament, and Iran hammered the final nail into the coffin.

MICHAEL CHURCH
in Kuala Lumpur

Resignations

But, oddly, it may be the Malaysians who end up benefiting most of all the co-hosts, because of rather than despite their dismal experience. Tengku Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, the vice-president of the FA – a body that has for too long been complacent about the fortunes of the domestic game – resigned after the team's abysmal performance. Three other senior FA members also stood down, while coach Norizan Bakar was informed of his impending sacking even before the Iran game. FA president Sultan Ahmad Shah – father of Tengku Abdullah – resisted calls to resign, instead calling for a task force to examine where the ills of the country's football lie.

For a nation that has for too long dwelt in the past, such a disastrous outcome was always expected. The paucity of the performances in comparison to those of the other co-hosts – Vietnam reached the last eight, while Indonesia and Thailand only just missed out – accentuated the parlous health of the country's football. The Malaysians were once a power of sorts in Asia, but have achieved little of note since qualifying for the 1980 Olympic finals. Even then, the United States-led boycott of those Games, in Moscow, meant Malaysia did not actually get to participate. The domestic game has been in decline ever since. Match-fixing scandals rocked the sport during the 1990s, and there has long been ambivalence towards continental competition and an arrogance in relation to the rest of south-east Asia, despite the fact the Malaysians have been left trailing in the wake of Thailand and Singapore.

But the very public failure at the Asian Cup may be the jolt needed to finally rouse Malaysians from their slumbers. While their hopes of becoming a force in the continental game remain slim, the opportunity now exists for the country to make a much-needed fresh start.

That in itself may turn out to be vindication enough for the confederation's decision to hand the hosting rights to so many countries. ●

> **"This is a football team playing in an important tournament, not a tourist group"**
>
> *Iraq coach Jorvan Vieira expresses his frustration after a hotel hitch*

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Onwards and upwards?

The FIFA president, who was re-elected unopposed in May, looks forward to his third term in office

WHAT IS the most important issue facing FIFA?
Social responsibility. Throughout the world, football has become such an important phenomenon that we need to demonstrate our sense of responsibility towards society at large. That starts with players and includes clubs, leagues, referees, national associations and continental confederations, who work on behalf of football and on behalf of the important role it plays now in the world.

What about the role of the World Cup in all of this?
You can see that the World Cup in Germany last year left a great legacy, and not only in financial terms – it showed that football can be a source of positive energy radiating throughout the world. We want to keep it that way.

Doubts have been raised about South Africa's capability to host the World Cup in 2010. What do you think?
Barring a natural disaster, South Africa will be staging the World Cup in 2010. The only back-up plan we have is South Africa, and the back-up plan to the back-up plan is South Africa. Should we have that natural disaster, however, then there are various options open to us. The easiest would be to go back to Germany, but there are a number of other countries ready to step up and organise a World Cup at short notice, in Europe, Asia and North America – meaning the United States to be precise. As far as work in South Africa proceeding, the local organising committee is working well and we have appointed the chief executive of the 2006 World Cup, Horst R Schmidt, to work there for us in charge of a FIFA team of 10 to 12 people, so we all work hand in hand with the South Africans.

What is the situation regarding the 2014 finals?
The 2014 finals were designated by the rotation system to go to South America and now we have only one candidate, Brazil. But, make no mistake: just because we have only one candidate, it does not mean that the high standard of requirements will be changed. Brazil will have to provide all the essential guarantees every country has to provide. The formal decision will be taken by the FIFA executive committee meeting in Doha in November.

Various countries are already considering bids to host the 2018 World Cup. Which continent will that go to?
Once we have decided on 2014 we will tackle the World Cup after that and decide whether to maintain the rotation system or alter it. Obviously, what we decide about 2014 may limit our actions concerning 2018.

What are the other key issues at the moment?
An issue of utmost importance for me is that we continue training our referees. We have invested $14million [£7m] in referee training programmes over the next four years. The pressure on referees is increasing all the time, and we need to make sure that they are up to standard. We are on the same track here as UEFA, which is interested in seeing if it can help with a system of four assistant referees instead of three. We have tested the system here in Zurich to see if this is something which, in the future, can help the referee exercise better match control.

What about violence in football?
First of all, this is a reflection of the violence in society at large. Football is sometimes in danger of being taken

hostage by this violence. However, we are also aware of our responsibilities and we have to do all we can to ensure safety and security even if, above all, this is a responsibility of government. But there are lessons we can learn about the safety and comfort of stadia. In the United Kingdom, which used to be the home of hooliganism, they showed that the use of all-seater stadia means you can reduce hooligan violence to almost nothing. So in this way we can show that football knows it can live up to its responsibility, as does society at large. But, you know, this is not only an issue of fans. This year's English League Cup Final, at the Millennium stadium in Cardiff, ended in a brawl on the pitch between the players; also the Champions League game between Valencia and Internazionale. I am unable to understand, or grasp, what is happening when the players themselves try to pour petrol on the flames – and sometimes coaches, too.

How do you judge the state of the fight against racism?
It is unfortunate that we are still discussing this phenomenon in 2007. Football should always be something which unites all people. But we fall victim to trends in our own societies, and it worries and hurts me. We are only now starting to react strongly enough. I was pleased to see that Spain is at last tackling the problem there. Financial fines are not sufficient punishments. Suspensions, points deductions and exclusions are the only solutions. National associations need courage to take such decisions but they will produce results. The new FIFA disciplinary code means we have not only the right but also the obligation to intervene if we think a punishment is not sufficient.

What about doping in football?
This is always a difficult issue. The International Olympic Committee recently appointed me as one of its four representatives on the World Anti-Doping Agency. Politics is putting sport under a lot of pressure over doping, and we are responding to that and for our own reasons. For example, we want to have the Puerto case in Spain reopened [in March, the Spanish authorities dropped their *Operacion Puerto* investigation into the alleged doping of cyclists and, reportedly, other athletes]. We know that cycling is a part of this investigation, but we want to know who else is involved. We want the case to be reopened even if there is the risk that it could concern football players. We have been told that this may, in fact, not be the case but, if so, then we have asked that we have it confirmed in writing.

When you became president, FIFA had a deficit of 15million Swiss francs [£6.1m]; now it is 752m Swiss francs [£307.1m] in credit. Why does FIFA need so much in the bank?
Five years ago many people criticised FIFA for bad financial behaviour and now we are criticised for having too much money. But we have to have enough reserves to protect us just in case something goes wrong – for example, with a World Cup. Also, people often overlook the fact that we distribute 70 per cent of our revenues to the national associations through our various assistance programmes.

How did you view UEFA's decision to award Euro 2012 to Poland and Ukraine instead of Italy, who had been favourites?
It's not up to me to comment on a decision like that, though I must say I noted that the decision was taken by the UEFA executive, only 12 people – a heavy responsibility for such a small number. At least when FIFA decides on a World Cup host there are 23 of us. I am also happy, incidentally, that we have more and more former great players involved in our administrative work – Michel Platini as president of UEFA, and now Franz Beckenbauer is a member of the FIFA executive. Also at FIFA we have Angel Maria Villar of Spain who was an international player in his day.

Do you think that, in Europe, you will eventually succeed in imposing a rule by which clubs must field at least six home-grown players and a maximum of five foreign players?
People say this all came from the Bosman decision, but that decision, in 1995, concerned only the free movement of players at the end of a contract. In the European Union, people can move across borders with the same working rights, but footballers are not like painters or decorators. This was recognised in the European Union's Nice Declaration of 1999, which said that the specificity of sport should be recognised. Unfortunately, however, this has never passed into law. We are working towards this now with the European Commission after the recent inter-governmental inquiry into the governance of European football. I hope that eventually we will get six-and-five through. But people should appreciate this is a problem only in Europe. We were very encouraged at the last two Club World Championships – in 2005 Sao Paulo won with a team of 10 Brazilians and one Uruguayan; in 2006 Internacional beat Barcelona with 11 Brazilians, not one of whom was in the Brazilian national team. That should have made a positive impression in Europe, where local players are developed in youth squads but blocked from the first team by too many foreign players. Think how those clubs could save money.

You were the only candidate for the presidency at congress in Zurich. How did you feel about that?
It was the first time I had been the only candidate, which shows that people felt confidence in what I have done over the previous nine years. When I was elected first in Paris in 1998 I said I thought a president should stay in office for only two terms – which was true, it was what I thought then. But what happened was that a lot of extra work was then necessary partly because of the number of obstacles and spanners which were thrown into the works. In 2002, in Seoul, a large number of delegates at congress expressed their support for me, and so we went on together. Football has changed enormously over the last nine years, and it seems the national associations decided it was important to keep the same president at the helm for another four years.

How has football changed during your term as president, and how have you changed?
Football has changed immensely in becoming an economic power, though this has a downside because in many leagues too many teams have as their ambition not winning titles but merely avoiding relegation. What has not changed enough is that there is still too much amateurism in football administration. How have I changed? That is really up to other people to say but I don't think I have changed much. When I played football I was a No 9, an attacker, and sometimes I was seen more in a game and sometimes less. I think it's still the same. ●

Interview by Keir Radnedge

"Many people used to criticise FIFA for bad financial behaviour; now it's because we have too much money"

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ITALY

Loyal service... Pavel Nedved stayed for the Serie B season

Old Lady's new era

Paddy Agnew reports on the return of 27-times champions Juventus to Serie A

> **Juventus are not at a point of arrival but a point of departure**
>
> *Jean-Claude Blanc, Juve's managing director*

THE "OLD LADY" is back. After a year of shame and humiliation in the "purgatory" of Serie B, thanks to the club's involvement in the *Calciopoli* match-fixing scandal, Juventus return to Serie A.

And the club, who won the second division title despite a nine-point penalty, are clearly determined to take over where they left off – they were demoted having topped the Serie A standings in 2005-06. Juve look very competitive, apparently having paid off the debts to "football society" for the *Calciopoli* affair.

There will doubtless be those who feel that the 27-times champions have resurfaced with suspicious alacrity, arguing that the club have not been punished severely enough for their fundamental role in the scandal. In fairness, there was nothing suspicious about their Serie B title win, which was achieved in difficult, traumatic circumstances and in a football context totally new for both the club and many of their big-name players.

Also in fairness, this is a new Juventus. The Luciano Moggi-Antonio Giraudo-Roberto Bettega directorship trio, rulers of the club's destiny for the past decade and more, have all been offloaded. Remember, Juventus moved quickly last summer in the immediate wake of the scandal to distance the club from, above all, Giraudo and Moggi, two key figures in the inquiry. In practice, the entire Juventus board

was called on to resign.Club president Giovanni Coboli Gigli and managing director Jean-Claude Blanc, the men who guided Juventus through the wilderness of Serie B, have now been joined by a new coach, Claudio Ranieri. He replaced Didier Deschamps, who surprisingly resigned in May. There is also a raft of new players, including Czech defender Zdenek Grygera (Ajax), Portuguese midfielder Tiago (Lyon), striker Vincenzo Iaquinta (Udinese), Bosnian midfielder Hasan Salihamidzic (Bayern Munich), Argentinian midfielder Sergio Almiron (Empoli) and Portuguese defender Jorge Andrade (Deportiva La Coruna).

Perhaps more importantly for the return to Serie A, big-name players such as Czech midfielder Pavel Nedved, captain and forward Alessandro Del Piero, goalkeeper Gigi Buffon, French striker David Trezeguet and Italo-Argentinian midfielder Mauro Camoranesi have all been persuaded to stay.

Distinctly upbeat

So it was no surprise then that the mood on the first day back at the Vinovo training centre in mid-July was distinctly upbeat: "We're very happy with the quality of the squad we have put together," Blanc said. "We've held on to our big-name players while also strengthening the squad, with all the purchases made in agreement with Claudio Ranieri...We can count on 16 internationals and four World Cup winners.

"Juventus are not now at a point of arrival but rather a point of departure since we're about to set off on a two- or three-year journey. As of now, nobody is making us favourites for the title but the great thing about sport is that nothing is certain."

Underlining the uncertainty of sport was the man standing beside him, Ranieri.

Deschamps had been widely expected to lead Juventus this season having done so well last term, but he quit when he could not find agreement with the board on the club's future plans, in particular with regard to new signings.

With the Frenchman gone, Juventus would dearly have loved to hire World Cup-winning coach Marcello Lippi, who enjoyed two very successful spells in Turin (1994-99 and 2001-04). Lippi, however, is still enjoying his post-Germany

FIVE TO WATCH

Big chance...Suazo

DAVID SUAZO
(Internazionale)
One of the most exciting players in Serie A now gets his chance with a major club following his £7million transfer from Cagliari. The Honduran international striker was confirmed as Inter's main summer signing despite the intervention of city rivals Milan, who also claimed to have signed him.

TIAGO
(Juventus)
The dynamic Portuguese midfielder revived his reputation last season at French champions Lyon after an unproductive spell at Chelsea, whom

Chasing fourth title...Tiago

he joined from Benfica. He nevertheless won the league title in England, and now remarkably has the chance to win a fourth domestic championship with as many clubs in as many years.

LUDOVIC GIULY
(Roma)
The French midfielder is aiming to revive a career that ground to a halt at

Revival bid...Giuly

Barcelona last season. He joined Roma for just over £2m.

FABIO QUAGLIARELLA
(Udinese)
Quagliarella, one of the hottest properties in Italian football, was expected to leave Sampdoria this summer, but few people expected Udinese, co-owners of his contract, to buy out Samp's share in him to take the young striker for themselves. Rumours persist that he could still move to one of his many admirers, who include Manchester United.

CHRISTIAN VIERI
(Fiorentina)
The *Viola* are Vieri's 15th club. The forward joined Atalanta last summer on a pay-as-you-score basis, receiving £70,000 for each goal (four in seven

Viola contract...Vieri

appearances). Atalanta chose not to renew the deal, but Fiorentina stepped in to offer the former international a one-year contract.

Hot property...Quagliarella

Staying put...experienced skipper Alessandro Del Piero

"sabbatical" and also is reportedly loath to return to coaching given that his son Davide is currently under investigation for his role in the GEA player agency allegedly controlled by Moggi.

Juventus then began an urgent search for someone else, which ended up focusing on Ranieri and former Juventus and Chelsea player Gianluca Vialli, nowadays a TV pundit. The fact Ranieri was willing to settle for a three-year contract worth around £650,000 after tax per season may have swung it for him since Vialli is reported to have asked for twice that amount.

Wanted man

Juventus moved quickly given that Ranieri was a wanted man, with a live offer from Manchester City. Indeed, he had reportedly travelled to England for negotiations with representatives of Thaksin Shinawatra, the former Thai prime minister and new City owner.

Ranieri is hugely experienced, having coached Cagliari, Napoli, Fiorentina, Valencia, Atletico Madrid and Chelsea. But for him the prospect of leading Juventus was impossible to resist, as indeed it would be for virtually every Italian coach.

Not surprisingly, Ranieri was making fighting sounds on his first day in the new job. "We'll be a nuisance for everybody. I sense that some of the other teams are already worried by us, and that's a good sign," he said. "Juventus have done really well in the transfer market, things have got off to a good start, but it is only when we start playing that we'll know if we have managed to bridge the gap between us and the strongest teams [Milan and Internazionale]. However, I can tell the fans one thing – we'll be playing to win, always."

For Ranieri, this is an important chance to rid himself of the "nice-guy-but-a-loser" image that has dogged him for a long time. Since being offloaded by Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich in 2004 to make way for Jose Mourinho, he has been largely on the sidelines, out of work for almost two years after a second, brief and unsuccessful spell at Valencia.

However, he re-established his credentials in emphatic style when returning to Serie A action in February this year to take over relegation-threatened Parma. He guided the club to a 12th-place finish, well clear of the drop, after the team picked up 27 points in his 16 games in charge.

Ranieri's first task will be to deal with the mutterings in the ranks of those who helped win promotion for Juve but who now seem excess to

requirements – Uruguayan striker Marcelo Zalayeta and defenders Domenico Criscito, Nicola Legrottaglie and French international Jean-Alain Boumsong. It was another of the lesser lights, defender Giorgio Chiellini (in fact, probably destined to stay at the club), who sounded the initial distress signals when complaining that the club had made a "big fuss" about certain names (Buffon, Nedved, Camoranesi) but had done little about others.

Ranieri responded by labelling Chiellini a child, suggesting that certain complaints should not be aired to the media. The coach added: "He's in the wrong here, he has damaged the team spirit and I cannot forgive that because for me the team spirit is sacred."

In football terms, Ranieri's initial problems may revolve around just how and when he uses new boy Iaquinta – with Del Piero or Trezeguet, or with both of them in a three-man attack? How, too, will the new central midfield partnership of Tiago and Almiron function?

During the new season, the spectre of match-fixing is likely to again haunt both Juventus and Italian football, if only tangentially. This is because we are due to experience "*Calciopoli*: The Sequel", given that 37 people have been summoned for alleged "sports fraud", committed within the ambit of the original scandal.

This state judicial trial will go over much of the same ground as that already covered by the Italian football federation's hastily-mounted inquiry last summer. The latter was largely based on evidence made available by two Naples-based state investigators, Filippo Beatrice and Giuseppe Narducci, who have now concluded their own inquiry, which called for the group of 37 to stand trial.

Nearly all the major protagonists in last summer's hearing are due to stand trial again – Giraudo, the former Juve CEO, Moggi, the club's former managing director, referee Massimo De Santis, ex-federation vice-president Innocenza Mazzini and Pierluigi Pairetto and Paolo Bergamo, both formerly responsible for refereeing appointments.

The federation hearing ruled that Juventus had benefited from a concerted, season-long "felony" – the influencing of referees – aimed at ensuring they won the 2004-05 league title. Juventus were accordingly relegated to Serie B, docked points and stripped of their 2005 and 2006 titles, while Giraudo and Moggi received five-year bans.

"We'll be a nuisance and I sense some of the other teams are already worried"

Juventus coach Claudio Ranieri

No date has been set for this latest trial, which is almost certain to last years rather than months and which will focus on events linked to 29 games in the 2004-05 Serie A season. Although the trial can have no impact on matters such as the league table or the destination of titles, the football federation will be watching it closely, hoping that it confirms the disciplinary rulings of one year ago.

Intriguingly, Beatrice and Narducci both went on the record to complain about the manner in which the federation's original sentences last summer were softened by subsequent appeals and arbitrations (Juventus, for example, originally had 30 points docked for last season but that was reduced to nine).

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TEAM BY TEAM

Luis Jimenez, Internazionale

Enrico Chiesa, Siena (right)

Fabrizio Miccoli, Palermo

ATALANTA
COACH: Gigi Del Neri
KEY ARRIVALS: Coppola (Piacenza), Langella (Cagliari), De Ascentis (Torino)
KEY DEPARTURES: Migliaccio (Palermo), Ventola (Torino)
PREDICTION: Will do well to repeat last season's eighth-place finish. Coach Del Neri takes over a modest-looking squad.

CAGLIARI
COACH: Marco Giampaolo
KEY ARRIVALS: Larrivey (Huracan), Matri (Rimini), Parola (Sampdoria)
KEY DEPARTURES: Suazo (Inter), Esposito (Roma), Langella (Atalanta)
PREDICTION: Giampaolo will have his work cut out to avoid the drop after the departure of attacking trio David Suazo, Mauro Esposito and Antonio Langella.

CATANIA
COACH: Silvio Baldini
KEY ARRIVALS: Babu (Verona), G Tedesco (Reggina), Bizzarri (Gimnastic)
KEY DEPARTURES: Rossini (Livorno)
PREDICTION: New coach Baldini faces an uphill task but anything will be better than last season, when after the riot during which a policeman died, Catania had to play home games on a neutral ground.

EMPOLI
COACH: Luigi Cagni
KEY ARRIVALS: Giacomazzi (Lecce)
KEY DEPARTURES: Almiron (Juventus), Lucchini (Sampdoria)
PREDICTION: Have signed Uruguayan Guillermo Giacomazzi but will miss fellow midfielder Sergio Almiron. A repeat of last season's seventh-place finish looks tough.

FIORENTINA
COACH: Cesare Prandelli
KEY ARRIVALS: Vieri (Atalanta), Vanden Borre (Anderlecht), Lupoli (Arsenal), Hable (Hradec Kralove), Mazuch (Brno)
KEY DEPARTURES: Toni (Bayern Munich), Reginaldo (Parma), Balzaretti (Juventus)
PREDICTION: Without Luca Toni, Fiorentina look to Giampaolo Pazzini, Romanian Adrian Mutu and new signing Christian Vieri to lead the attack. But the team look a little under-strength.

GENOA
COACH: Gian Piero Gasperini
KEY ARRIVALS: Borriello (Milan), Bovo (Palermo), Paro (Juventus)
KEY DEPARTURES: none
PREDICTION: Promoted Genoa are treading with caution since staying in Serie A is everything.

INTERNAZIONALE
COACH: Roberto Mancini
KEY ARRIVALS: Suazo (Cagliari), Rivas (River Plate), Jimenez (Lazio)
KEY DEPARTURES: Grosso (Lyon)
PREDICTION: The champions look stronger with the arrival of striker David Suazo. So much so that the departure of full-back Fabio Grosso may go unnoticed.

JUVENTUS
COACH: Claudio Ranieri
KEY ARRIVALS: Iaquinta (Udinese), Tiago (Lyon), Almiron (Empoli), Grygera (Ajax), Salihamidzic (Bayern Munich), Jorge Andrade (Deportivo La Coruna), Balzaretti (Fiorentina), Molinaro (Siena)
KEY DEPARTURES: Kovac (Dortmund), Tudor (Hajduk Split), Kapo (Birmingham), Paro (Genoa)
PREDICTION: Back in Serie A and looking competitive. New coach Ranieri can count on new names – midfielders Tiago and Sergio Almiron and defender Zdenek Grygera – but also on the old guard of Del Piero, Nedved, Trezeguet and Buffon.

LAZIO
COACH: Delio Rossi
KEY ARRIVALS: Del Nero (Brescia), Kolarov (OFK Belgrade)
KEY DEPARTURES: Jimenez (Inter), Peruzzi (retired)
PREDICTION: Lazio look very much like last season's side, minus keeper Angelo Peruzzi. Coach Rossi could do with reinforcements and will do well to repeat last season's third-place finish.

LIVORNO
COACH: Fernando Orsi
KEY ARRIVALS: Tavano (Roma), Dhorasoo (no club), Rossini (Catania)
KEY DEPARTURES: Lucarelli (Shakhtar Donetsk), Morrone (Parma)
PREDICTION: Without striker Cristiano Lucarelli, Livorno seem set to struggle. Striker Francesco Tavano and midfielder Vikash Dhorasoo add some class. But the squad lack strength.

MILAN
COACH: Carlo Ancelotti
KEY ARRIVALS: none
KEY DEPARTURES: Borriello (Genoa), Donati (Celtic), Ricardo Oliveira (Zaragoza), Abbiati (Atletico Madrid), Costacurta (retired)
PREDICTION: At press time, the reigning European champions reportedly had their eyes on strikers Alexandre Pato, Samuel Eto'o and "old boy" Andrii Shevchenko.

Vincenzo Montella, Sampdoria

Miguel Garcia, Reggina

Juve's David Trezeguet, Alessandro Del Piero and Pavel Nedved

A new name up front (and perhaps in defence) would be no bad thing in what will be a very busy season.

NAPOLI
COACH: Edi Reja
KEY ARRIVALS: Lavezzi (San Lorenzo), Hamysk (Brescia)
KEY DEPARTURES: none
PREDICTION: Back in Serie A after a six-year break, Napoli seem intent on relying on the useful squad that won promotion. Survival should be achieved.

PALERMO
COACH: Stefano Colantuono
KEY ARRIVALS: Miccoli (Benfica), Miglaccio (Atalanta), Jankovic (Mallorca)
KEY DEPARTURES: Corini, Di Michele (both Torino), Caracciolo (Sampdoria), Bovo (Genoa)
PREDICTION: Palermo, fifth last season, have a new coach in Colantuono (ex-Atalanta) but will be without schemer Eugenio Corini, striker David Di Michele and big target man Andrea Caracciolo. Can Fabrizio Miccoli, Giulio Miglaccio and Serb Bosko Jankovic fill the void?

PARMA
COACH: Domenico Di Carlo
KEY ARRIVALS: Reginaldo (Fiorentina), Morrone (Livorno)
KEY DEPARTURES: Grella (Torino)
PREDICTION: Di Carlo (ex-Mantova), another new coach, faces a tough task in his first season in Serie A. But Parma should do better than last season, when only the mid-season arrival of Claudio Ranieri saved them from relegation.

REGGINA
COACH: Massimo Ficcadenti
KEY ARRIVALS: Cozza (Siena), Joelson (AlbinoLeffe), Miguel Garcia (Sporting Lisbon)
KEY DEPARTURES: Bianchi (Man City)
PREDICTION: Reggina have re-signed old favourite Francesco Cozza and bought forward Joelson and defender Miguel Garcia to compensate for the loss of main striker Rolando Bianchi. But survival is the name of the game, and new coach Ficcadenti (ex-Verona), a Serie A debutant, faces a tough task.

ROMA
COACH: Luciano Spalletti
KEY ARRIVALS: Juan (Bayer Leverkusen), Esposito (Cagliari), Giuly (Barcelona)
KEY DEPARTURES: Tavano (Livorno), Wilhelmsson (Nantes), Montella (Sampdoria)
PREDICTION: There have been some useful-looking purchases such as Juan and Mauro Esposito. But Roma look a shade off title-winning pace.

SAMPDORIA
COACH: Walter Mazzarri
KEY ARRIVALS: Montella (Roma), Caracciolo (Palermo), Belluci (Bologna), Lucchini (Empoli), Sammarco (Chievo)
KEY DEPARTURES: Quagliarella (Udinese)
PREDICTION: New coach Mazzarri has a trio of new strikers – Vincenzo Montella, Andrea Caracciolo and Claudio Belluci – to call on. But the ex-Reggina boss will do well to repeat Samp's ninth-place finish of last season.

SIENA
COACH: Andrea Mandorlini
KEY ARRIVALS: Eleftheropoulos (Ascoli), Jarolim (Slavia Prague)
KEY DEPARTURES: Molinaro (Juventus)
PREDICTION: Veteran Enrico Chiesa may again lead the Siena attack in partnership with Massimo Maccarone. But the relatively modest squad of new coach Mandorlini (ex-Atalanta) seem likely to be involved in a relegation battle.

TORINO
COACH: Walter Novellino
KEY ARRIVALS: Di Michele, Corini (both Palermo), Ventola (Atalanta), Grella (Parma)
KEY DEPARTURES: De Ascentis (Atalanta)
PREDICTION: Narrowly missed the drop last term, but coach Novellino (ex-Samp) will fancy his new charges' chances of doing better. The purchase of strikers David Di Michele and Nicola Ventola, schemer Eugenio Corini and midfielder Vince Grella should help a lot.

UDINESE
COACH: Pasquale Marino
KEY ARRIVALS: Quagliarella (Sampdoria)
KEY DEPARTURES: Iaquinta (Juventus), De Sanctis (Sevilla), Muntari (Portsmouth)
PREDICTION: May struggle without keeper Morgan De Sanctis, forward Vincenzo Iaquinta and midfielder Sully Muntari, but striker Fabio Quagliarella looks a great buy. A UEFA Cup finish would be a good result for new coach Marino (ex-Catania). ●

Exit Capello, enter Schuster

Real Madrid have had a change of coach but will the new man be able to introduce a more enjoyable style? Sid Lowe reports

Hot seat...Bernd Schuster has his work cut out to make Real Madrid more attractive to watch while also keeping them on top

> "Keeping a straight face, president Calderon boasted about how he had stood by Capello 'with spectacular results'"

REAL MADRID'S decision to sack coach Fabio Capello and replace him with Getafe's Bernd Schuster might have been the worst-kept secret in football, but that did not spare us the charade of a saga that dragged on into the summer.

Stung by criticisms of "boring football" and smarting at the historic hanky-waving protest of fed-up fans at the Bernabeu, Madrid president Ramon Calderon as good as had his mind made up way back in February. Then, when the team were knocked out of the Champions League by Bayern Munich in early March, he had seen enough: Capello would not continue beyond the end of the season.

If Madrid had lost against bitter rivals Barcelona three nights later, the Italian would not even have continued beyond the end of the week. Madrid did not lose, though, taking a superb 3-3 draw from Camp Nou, and Capello continued – thanks, in large part, to the huge cost of paying him off and the difficulty of finding an adequate replacement midway through the season. But the fact that it was just a temporary reprieve was underlined by Calderon striking a pre-contract agreement with Schuster, protected by a £1.4million guarantee. A complete collapse would hasten Capello's departure, otherwise Madrid would wait until June and ease him out then.

What the president did not anticipate was that the Camp Nou draw would serve as the launchpad for an implausible but successful title challenge. Madrid lost just once in their last 17 games to clinch a first major trophy in four years, ending the club's longest drought in over half a century. Suddenly, Capello was a hero. As Madrid's challenge gathered momentum, some members of the board recognised privately that they had a problem: how, they asked, can we sack Capello if he wins the League?

But Calderon, whose relationship with the Italian was becoming increasingly strained, was adamant that he was going to get the sack, even as the players queued up to say that the coach should continue.

Adding muscle...Barca's Yaya Toure

Ever the populist, the only thing that could possibly change Calderon's mind was if the fans called for Capello to carry on. And they didn't – not even as Madrid clinched the title against Mallorca on the final day, Sunday, June 17.

Lack of action

That night should have been the watershed. But Calderon did not act. He did not even inform Capello of his decision; when the president appeared at the restaurant where the coach was toasting the title success, he simply ignored him and went off to celebrate somewhere else. The lack of action was understandable. Madrid had waited four years for a title, and Calderon, his mandate precarious, was not going to ruin his big night with a sacking. It was time to milk the celebrations for all they were worth. But the delay that followed was baffling.

Calderon refused to admit that Capello was on his way out, avoiding questions or insisting that the Italian was still in charge, even though he knew that everyone else knew what was coming. Somehow keeping a straight face, he even boasted of how he had stood by Capello during the season "with spectacular results".

Two board meetings, three false alarms and 11 days later a decision that had been taken four months earlier was finally made public. The delay had not even been

FIVE TO WATCH

Goals in store...Roberto Soldado

DIEGO FORLAN
(Atletico Madrid)
The Uruguayan has the responsibility of stepping into Fernando Torres's shoes at Atletico and must score a lot of goals. Luckily, he's a more natural No 9 than the Anfield-bound forward.

Natural No 9...Forlan

ROBERT PIRES
(Villarreal)
The Frenchman missed almost all of last season because of injury. When he returned towards the end, he propelled Villarreal to a UEFA Cup place with his vision and touch. Pires will bear much of the responsibility for replacing Juan Roman Riquelme.

JOAQUIN
(Valencia)
Joined Valencia from Betis for £17million last summer and took a while to shrug off the hefty price-tag.

Vision and touch...Pires

But once he had been granted a decent run in the side, Joaquin shone towards the end of the season. Given continuity, he could be a star once more this term.

GIOVANNI DOS SANTOS
(Barcelona)
The latest star to come through the Barcelona youth system. Coach Frank Rijkaard says the Mexican will get chances to demonstrate his enormous talent this season.

Shining star...Joaquin

ROBERTO SOLDADO
(Real Madrid)
A successful season at Osasuna meant Soldado defied the maxim that says kids who go out on loan never return to the Bernabeu. If he's given a chance, he will score a lot of goals.

Enormous talent...Dos Santos

down to negotiating a settlement with Capello, sporting director Predrag Mijatovic appearing at a press conference to admit that the decision had been taken unilaterally by the club; no one had even spoken to Capello, who was in Tibet.

The long wait was not yet over, either. Madrid began an unseemly, petty battle with Getafe about Schuster while Michael Laudrup, the man Getafe had lined up as a replacement, sat waiting in a local hotel, eventually giving up to go on holiday in New York instead.

Eventually, almost a month after the end of the season, the matter was resolved when, with Calderon and Getafe president Angel Torres refusing to talk to each other, Schuster raised almost £350,000 to buy himself out of his contract and cross the city to the Bernabeu.

Madrid at last had a new coach. And with it a new style, represented by Mijatovic and Schuster's press conference: it was no coincidence that neither man wore a tie. It was time to kick back and enjoy life a bit, time, Calderon announced, "to play good football, time for the Bernabeu to have fun at matches". Within a couple of days, the first two signings the German coach had requested arrived: central defender Christoph Metzelder, from Borussia Dortmund, and Barcelona striker Javier Saviola, both on frees. They were joined by £20m centre-back Pepe from Porto, forward Roberto Soldado, a loan returnee from Osasuna, and Liverpool keeper Jerzy Dudek.

But the men the new-look Madrid really needed to become the exciting team of Calderon's dreams continued to resist them. Cesc Fabregas and Kaka turned them down again, and Xabi Alonso also rejected a move. Reports that Madrid were about to sign Andres Iniesta from Barcelona, meanwhile, were shot down in flames.

Star search

As we went to press, Chelsea had told Madrid to forget about Arjen Robben, Arsenal had rejected a bid for Jose Antonio Reyes (on loan at the Bernabeu last season), and Dutch Under-21 starlet Royston Drenthe remained in Holland. The star that would lead the new Madrid still had not arrived; they had central defenders coming out of their ears, and more right-backs than they knew what to do with, but no wingers and no ball-playing central midfielder. Schuster, the disciple of the beautiful game, had his work cut out. For Mijatovic, meanwhile, five long weeks of summer heat and heavy negotiating awaited.

Things could hardly be any different on the other side of Spain's great divide. Barcelona stuck by their under-fire coach, Frank Rijkaard, and moved swiftly and effectively as they sought a more competitive, defensive edge in their determination to wrest the title back from Madrid. In came full-back Eric Abidal from Lyon and a much-needed defensive midfielder in the muscular shape of Yaya Toure from Monaco. The signing of central defender Gabriel Milito from Zaragoza was a little more complicated but eventually he too arrived. If £27.5m for three defensive players looked steep, at least they were players Barca really need, giving them a starting XI that, on paper at least, has virtually no weaknesses.

Ridiculous though it sounds, any problems that do arise may be in the attacking third. For all the defensive reinforcements, Barca did not pass up on a big star – no sooner had they relinquished the league title than Thierry Henry was touching down in Catalonia. But while 30,000 delighted fans turned out to welcome him, an awkward question hung in the air. How will the Frenchman go down in an already divided, ego-packed dressing room? Can he, Lionel Messi, Samuel Eto'o and Ronaldinho really play together? And if not, how is the player left out going to react?

> "Barca stuck by under-fire coach Frank Rijkaard and moved swiftly as they sought a more competitive, defensive edge"

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums
worldsoccer.com

Barca to Bernabeu...Javier Saviola

TEAM BY TEAM

Luis Garcia, Atletico Madrid

Getafe coach Michael Laudrup

Mark Gonzalez, Betis

Juan Arango, Mallorca

ALMERIA
COACH: Unai Emery
KEY ARRIVALS: Felipe Melo (Santander), Lopez Rekarte (Sociedad), Pulido (Getafe), Negredo (Castilla)
KEY DEPARTURES: Westerveld (released), De Palmas (Elche)
PREDICTION: Vital midfielder Albert Crusat has stayed on with the promoted side but they will still struggle.

ATHLETIC BILBAO
COACH: Joaquin Caparros
KEY ARRIVALS: Ocio (Sevilla), Cuellar (Gimnastic), Munoz, David Lopez (both Osasuna)
KEY DEPARTURES: Gonzalez (Hercules), Urzaiz (Ajax)
PREDICTION: A new president and a tough new coach for Athletic, who are desperate to avoid another relegation scrap.

ATLETICO MADRID
COACH: Javier Aguirre
KEY ARRIVALS: Luis Garcia (Liverpool), Raul Garcia (Osasuna), Abbiati (Milan), Cleber (Santos), Forlan (Villarreal)
KEY DEPARTURES: Fernando Torres (Liverpool), Gabi (Zaragoza), Galletti (Olympiakos)
PREDICTION: Standard-bearer Fernando Torres has gone, but Atletico have bought Diego Forlan as a replacement forward and midfield all-rounder Raul Garcia. Should claim a European place at least.

BARCELONA
COACH: Frank Rijkaard
KEY ARRIVALS: Henry (Arsenal), Toure (Monaco), G Milito (Zaragoza), Abidal (Lyon)
KEY DEPARTURES: Van Bronckhorst (Feyenoord), Saviola (Real Madrid), Giuly (Roma)
PREDICTION: Reacted swiftly to remedy last season's defensive failings. But is there really a place for Thierry Henry alongside Samuel Eto'o, Ronaldinho and Lionel Messi up front? Coach Rijkaard has a job on his hands but if he gets it right, Barca should be fabulous.

BETIS
COACH: Hector Cuper
KEY ARRIVALS: Gonzalez (Liverpool), Ricardo (Sporting Lisbon), Babic (Leverkusen)
KEY DEPARTURES: Romero (released)
PREDICTION: Betis turned to tough coach Cuper after last season's relegation scare and new signing Ricardo is a decent keeper. Survival should be easier.

DEPORTIVO LA CORUNA
COACH: Miguel Angel Lotina
KEY ARRIVALS: Lafita (Zaragoza), Arno (Recreativo), Ruben (Gimnastic)
KEY DEPARTURES: Capdevila (Villarreal), Arizmendi (Valencia), Jorge Andrade (Juventus), Duscher (released)
PREDICTION: Three more key men have departed (Joan Capdevila, Jorge Andrade and Aldo Duscher) and new coach Lotina has his work cut out to avoid another mediocre campaign.

ESPANYOL
COACH: Ernesto Valverde
KEY ARRIVALS: Valdo (Osasuna), Rodriguez (Spartak Moscow), Smiljanic (Partizan Belgrade)
KEY DEPARTURES: Pandiani (Osasuna)
PREDICTION: Valdo's arrival has boosted the fine attacking line-up, and a European place is possible if Espanyol show more consistency than last term.

GETAFE
COACH: Michael Laudrup
KEY ARRIVALS: Uche (Recreativo), Kepa (Sevilla), Ustari (Independiente)
KEY DEPARTURES: Alexis (Valencia), Paredes (Zaragoza), Vivar Dorado (Valladolid), Pulido (Almeria)
PREDICTION: Ikechukwu Uche and Kepa are excellent additions up front but Getafe, under new young coach Laudrup, lack the squad to finish above mid-table.

LEVANTE
COACH: Abel Resino
KEY ARRIVALS: Savio (Sociedad), Viqueira (Recreativo), Arveladze (AZ)
KEY DEPARTURES: Salva (released), Kapo (Birmingham)
PREDICTION: Only just survived last season and have lost Salva and Kapo, so Levante are likely to be in trouble.

MALLORCA
COACH: Gregorio Manzano
KEY ARRIVALS: Webo (Osasuna), Navarro (Valencia), Lux (River Plate), Borja Valero (Real Madrid B)
KEY DEPARTURES: Jankovic (Palermo), Maxi Lopez (Barcelona), Tristan (Livorno)
PREDICTION: Have a fine player in Juan Arango but Bosko Jankovic's departure is a blow and mid-table again beckons.

MURCIA
COACH: Lucas Alcaraz
KEY ARRIVALS: Arzo (Villarreal), De Lucas (Alaves), Regueiro (Valencia), Garcia, Mejia (both Real Madrid)

Florent Sinama-Pongolle, Recreativo

Roberto Ayala, Zaragoza

Timo Hildebrand, Valencia

KEY DEPARTURES: Antonito, Aranda, Emerson (all released)
PREDICTION: New midfielder Pablo Garcia is a terrifying presence, and Murcia should avoid going straight back down.

OSASUNA
COACH: Cuco Ziganda
KEY ARRIVALS: Portillo (Gimnastic), Viana (Valencia), Pandiani (Espanyol)
KEY DEPARTURES: Soldado (Real Madrid), Raul Garcia (Atletico), Valdo (Espanyol), Webo (Mallorca), David Lopez (Bilbao), Milosevic
PREDICTION: Coach Ziganda is starting to get results, and new signings Javier Portillo and Walter Pandiani will help up front, but Raul Garcia's move is a big blow.

RACING SANTANDER
COACH: Marcelino
KEY ARRIVALS: Duscher (Deportivo), Jorge Lopez (Valencia)
KEY DEPARTURES: Felipe Melo (Almeria), Balboa (Real Madrid), Scaloni (Lazio), Alfaro (retired)
PREDICTION: Under Marcelino, a success at Recreativo last year, Racing will again be well-organised but heavily dependent on the little-and-large striking duo of Pedro Munitis and Nikola Zigic.

REAL MADRID
COACH: Bernd Schuster
KEY ARRIVALS: Metzelder (Dortmund), Soldado (Osasuna), Pepe (Porto), Saviola (Barcelona), Dudek (Liverpool)
KEY DEPARTURES: Roberto Carlos (Fenerbahce), Beckham (LA Galaxy), Ivan Helguera (Valencia)
PREDICTION: Real could hardly have placed the bar higher for Schuster after sacking Fabio Capello for his "boring" football, despite winning the League. But they will certainly challenge for the title.

RECREATIVO
COACH: Victor Munoz
KEY ARRIVALS: Alvarez (Villarreal), Martins, Varela (both Sporting Lisbon)
KEY DEPARTURES: Uche, Mario (both Getafe), Cazorla, Arzo (both Villarreal)
PREDICTION: It is hard to see Recreativo building on their fine showing last season. The permanent deal for Florent Sinama-Pongolle is outweighed by the departure of coach Marcelino, Ikechukwu Uche and Santi Cazorla.

SEVILLA
COACH: Juande Ramos
KEY ARRIVALS: De Sanctis (Udinese), Keita (Lens), Boulahrouz (Chelsea)
KEY DEPARTURES: David (Levante), Ocio (Bilbao)
PREDICTION: So far Sevilla have held on to all their key players and coach Ramos, as well as adding a couple of very interesting signings. Another fantastic season is still a possibility.

VALENCIA
COACH: Quique Sanchez Flores.
KEY ARRIVALS: Arizmendi (Deportivo), Alexis (Getafe), Ivan Helguera (Real Madrid), Hildebrand (Stuttgart)
KEY DEPARTURES: Ayala (Villarreal), Viana (Osasuna), Navarro (Mallorca), Jorge Lopez (Santander), Regueiro (Murcia)
PREDICTION: Injuries and in-fighting destroyed last season's title challenge. They should be major contenders this time round, though, especially after holding on to main striker David Villa and the return from injury of Edu and Vicente.

VALLADOLID
COACH: Mendilibar
KEY ARRIVALS: Butelle (Valencia), Vivar Dorado (Getafe)
KEY DEPARTURES: Manchez, Suarez, Chema (all released)
PREDICTION: Stormed the second division last term but their signings do not convince and a struggle looks likely.

VILLARREAL
COACH: Manuel Pellegrini
KEY ARRIVALS: Tomasson (Stuttgart), Capdevila (Deportivo), Diego Lopez (Real Madrid), Cazorla (Recreativo), Caceres (Defensor)
KEY DEPARTURES: Forlan (Atletico), Arruabarena (AEK), Alvarez (Recreativo), Ayala (Zaragoza), Tacchinardi, Pena (both released)
PREDICTION: Have shown they can live without Juan Riquelme but replacing Diego Forlan could be another matter. Much is expected of Jon Dahl Tomasson.

ZARAGOZA
COACH: Victor Fernandez
KEY ARRIVALS: Ayala (Villarreal), Pavon (Real Madrid), Ricardo Oliveira (Milan), Gabi (Atletico), Paredes (Getafe), Matuzalem (Shakhtar)
KEY DEPARTURES: Pique (Man Utd), G Milito (Barcelona), Ewerthon (Stuttgart)
PREDICTION: Replaced the inspirational Gabriel Milito with the superb Roberto Ayala, who had only just joined Villarreal. Oliveira, Francisco Pavon and Gabi are other good buys. Top-four material. ●

The £50m gamble

Bayern Munich's unprecedented spending spree has dominated the build-up to the new Bundesliga campaign, says Nick Bidwell

Holy trinity...Bayern's three big signings: Luca Toni (right), Franck Ribery (centre) and Miroslav Klose

IT'S AMAZING HOW a poor season can concentrate the mind. In recent times, the Bayern Munich management have made a virtue of economic prudence, arguing that they were in no position to compete with the high-rollers from England, Spain and Italy.

But desperate times – failing to make the Champions League for the first time in a dozen years – need desperate measures. Bayern have adopted the ways of the casino, splashing out £50million on eight new players, including three big international names – French attacking midfielder Franck Ribery (£17.8m, from Marseille), and strikers Miroslav Klose (£8.5m, Werder Bremen) and Italian Luca Toni (£7.8m, Fiorentina).

Bayern's single-mindedness to land each of their transfer targets was impressive. Klose could have gone to the Premiership or Serie A, Toni had all Italy's top clubs at his door, and Ribery was the hardest nut to crack of all. The Frenchman had admitted that his preferred destination was Arsenal or Real Madrid but the Bavarians had no intention of being deterred. They already enjoyed harmonious links with the Marseille board, and the entente became even more cordial when Bayern made their successful offer, plus a £2.8m add-on if they made the Champions League in 2008-09. Bayern had not just outbid Arsenal and Real, they had obliterated them.

Should, as expected, that bonus be paid, Ribery will become the most expensive player in German history, the current record being the £18.5m paid by Borussia Dortmund for Brazilian forward Marcio Amoroso to Parma six years ago.

Never before have Bayern spent so much. Never before have they been so anxious about losing ground domestically and in Europe. "These investments are proof of our new ambition," declared general manager Uli Hoeness. "The objective is to return to the Champions League straight away, win the Bundesliga and play attractive football with attack-conscious players.

"We know we're under a lot of pressure to deliver. Our standards had fallen and we had to put it right. Our busy time in the market this summer is a one-off. We will not be as active in the next two or three years, when we'll probably make do with one or two signings."

Bayern coach Ottmar Hitzfeld must still be rubbing his hands in glee at all the high-class talent he has to work with. As well as the expensive new attacking trident, there are some other excellent recruits – Argentinian schemer Jose Ernesto Sosa, Turkish international midfielder Hamit Altintop and two young German internationals: left-back or wing-back Marcell Jansen and attacker Jan Schlaudraff. To stabilise the team, he can still call on battle-hardened old hands such as keeper Oliver Kahn, centre-back Lucio, full-back Willy Sagnol and left-sided Brazilian

> **"We are under a lot of pressure to deliver. Our standards fell and we have to put it right"**
>
> *Uli Hoeness, Bayern general manager*

midfielder Ze Roberto, back at the Allianz Arena after a year in his native land with Santos.

The all-important question is how quickly Hitzfeld can piece together a homogenous, winning unit from the surfeit of riches put before him. But if any coach can, it is the meticulous, tactically adept "General". Hitzfeld says his number one priority is a solid defence: "A championship-winning team isn't the one that scores the most goals, it's the one that is the best organised at the back. Last season we were sadly lacking in this area. Improvement is a must."

Harmony challenge

His hardest challenge may be to achieve harmony in the camp. Every week a number of superstars will find themselves confined to the bench, and big names at Bayern are not renowned for remaining tight-lipped about grievances. One young man who could be unsettled is World Cup attacking star Lukas Podolski, currently in rehabilitation after a knee operation. The forward did not exactly set the Bundesliga alight last season, his first in Bayern colours, and with Klose and Toni cast as untouchables, he looks set for the role of *reserve de luxe*. His good friend, midfielder Bastian Schweinsteiger, could also find a first-team berth hard to pin down.

A widely held view is that Bayern have overstretched themselves financially, in the same way that Dortmund did a few years ago, profligacy that almost led them to bankruptcy. But Bayern deny the charge of irresponsibly chasing the dream. "We aren't gamblers," says chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, who points to the £17.8m received from Manchester United for Owen Hargreaves, which went straight into the transfer kitty, and the fact that a long run in the UEFA Cup may generate up to £18m in TV rights and prize money, a figure not so distant from the £21m they earned from the Champions League last season. Bayern also hope the arrival of Klose, Ribery, Toni and company will substantially boost their merchandising income.

Sixteen of the 18 Bundesliga coaches are confident Bayern will sweep all before them in the coming months. Can they be wrong?

FIVE TO WATCH

No 1 hit...Neuer

CARLOS ALBERTO
(Werder Bremen)
Negotiations to lure the Brazilian attacking midfielder from Corinthians seemed to last for ever. But when were transfers involving MSI ever simple? There's no doubt about Carlos Alberto's skill levels, imagination and goalscoring nous – his goals include one for Porto in the 2004 Champions League Final. But there is a question mark about his penchant for nightlife.

Magic moments...Ribery

20 goals...Gekas

THEOFANIS GEKAS
(Bayer Leverkusen)
The Greek's 20 goals for Bochum last season, his first in Germany, brought him the league top scorer award and made him one of the finds of the campaign. The ex-Panathinaikos striker promptly joined Leverkusen this summer.

MARIO GOMEZ
(Stuttgart)
Young striker of German-Spanish dual-nationality who not only made a huge contribution to Stuttgart's surprise league triumph last season, scoring 14 goals, but was also on target on his debut for the *Nationalmannschaft* in a friendly against Switzerland.

MANUEL NEUER
(Schalke)
Few could believe it when Schalke coach Mirko Slomka opted to drop tried and tested keeper Frank Rost in favour of the 20-year-old rookie last autumn. After a game or two, the reasons were blindingly obvious. In the not-too-distant future, Neuer will be Germany's No 1.

FRANCK RIBERY
(Bayern Munich)
German football is all about one-on-one duels, and Bayern have signed an expert in the magical little French dribbler, who is at home on either flank or through the middle. Brave and elusive, Ribery should have a ball taking on and beating the no-nonsense defenders that inhabit the Bundesliga.

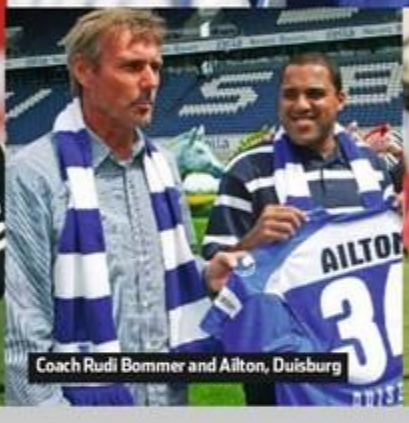
Target man...Gomez

Nightlife...Carlos Alberto

TEAM BY TEAM

Andre Mijatovic, Arminia Bielefeld

Giovanni Federico, Karlsruhe


Coach Rudi Bommer and Ailton, Duisburg

Rafael Van der Vaart, Hamburg

ARMINIA BIELEFELD
COACH: Ernst Middendorp
KEY ARRIVALS: Fernandez (Kaizer Chiefs), Kampantais (AEK Athens), Kirch (Gladbach), Mijatovic (Greuther Furth)
KEY DEPARTURES: Westermann (Schalke), Ziegler (Dortmund)
PREDICTION: An extremely well-organised and forceful side worth much more than the sum of their individual parts. They will be banking on another good season from Polish striker Artur Wichniarek.

BAYER LEVERKUSEN
COACH: Michael Skibbe
KEY ARRIVALS: Faty (Roma), Friedrich (Mainz), Gekas (Bochum), Sinkiewicz (Koln), Vidal (Colo Colo)
KEY DEPARTURES: Babic (Betis), Juan (Roma), Stenman (Groningen), Voronin (Liverpool)
PREDICTION: After losing some top-notch talent, they may struggle to repeat last season's fifth-place finish. Much will depend on attacking-third old-timers Bernd Schneider and Sergej Barbarez.

BAYERN MUNICH
COACH: Ottmar Hitzfeld
KEY ARRIVALS: Hamit Altintop (Schalke), Jansen (Gladbach), Klose (Werder), Ribery (Marseille), Sosa (Estudiantes), Schlaudraff (Alemannia), Toni (Fiorentina), Ze Roberto (Santos)
KEY DEPARTURES: Hargreaves (Manchester United), Pizarro (Chelsea), Salihamidzic (Juventus), Makaay (Feyenoord), Scholl (retired)
PREDICTION: It's the title or nothing for the Bavarians, and if the "Dream 15" fail to come up with the goods, something will be seriously wrong.

BOCHUM
COACH: Marcel Koller
KEY ARRIVALS: Auer (Karlsruhe), Fuchs (Greuther Furth), Lastuvka (Shakhtar Donetsk), Mieciel (PAOK Salonika), Sestak (Zilina)
KEY DEPARTURES: Drobny (Hertha), Gekas (Leverkusen), Misimovic (Nurnberg)
PREDICTION: Coach Koller says their only goal is survival. But they could well fail to achieve it after the departure of league top scorer Theofanis Gekas and classy playmaker Zvjezdan Misimovic.

BORUSSIA DORTMUND
COACH: Thomas Doll
KEY ARRIVALS: Blaszczykowski (Wisla Krakow), Klimowicz (Wolfsburg), Kovac (Juventus), Petric (Basle)
KEY DEPARTURES: Metzelder (Real Madrid)
PREDICTION: The attack looks as if it will offer plenty of goals. That, and the replacement of Germany centre-back Christoph Metzelder with Croat Robert Kovac, should spell a top-six finish.

DUISBURG
COACH: Rudi Bommer
KEY ARRIVALS: Ailton (Grasshopper), Fernando Santos (Flamengo), Georgiev (Slavia Prague), Ishiaku (Club Brugge), Meyer (Leverkusen), Tiffert (Salzburg)
KEY DEPARTURES: Bugera (Kaiserslautern)
PREDICTION: The promoted Zebras have shown much ambition in their summer recruitment drive, and even though Brazilian striker Ailton comes with a bad-boy reputation, the team have a more than even chance of staying out of trouble.

EINTRACHT FRANKFURT
COACH: Friedhelm Funkel
KEY ARRIVALS: Inamoto (Galatasaray), Mahdavikia (Hamburg)
KEY DEPARTURES: Huggel (Basle), Jones (Schalke)
PREDICTION: Frankfurt are light years away from the side that was a Bundesliga power in the 1970s and won the UEFA Cup in 1980. They finished just above the relegation zone in each of the last two seasons and another struggle would be no surprise.

ENERGIE COTTBUS
COACH: Petrik Sander
KEY ARRIVALS: Angelov (Levski Sofia), Bassila (Larisa), Ipsa (Varteks), Rangelov (Strasbourg)
KEY DEPARTURES: McKenna (Koln), Munteanu, Radu (both Wolfsburg)
PREDICTION: The team with no big names and almost exclusively comprising non-Germans confounded the experts by staying up last season. But without their top scorer, Vlad Munteanu, they may not be so lucky this time around.

HAMBURG
COACH: Huub Stevens
KEY ARRIVALS: Zidan (Mainz)
KEY DEPARTURES: Mahdavikia (Frankfurt), Wachter (Rostock)
PREDICTION: Only champions Stuttgart picked up more points in the second half of last season. Provided always-influential

Robert Kovac, Borussia Dortmund

Diego, Werder Bremen

Thomas Hitzlsperger, Stuttgart

playmaker Rafael Van der Vaart stays fit, Hamburg are top-four material.

HANNOVER
COACH: Dieter Hecking
KEY ARRIVALS: Hanke (Wolfsburg), Lauth (Hamburg), Pinto (Alemannia)
KEY DEPARTURES: Andersson (Helsingborgs)
PREDICTION: Strangely, they won more games away than at home in 2006-07. UEFA Cup qualification is dependent on the new strikeforce of Mike Hanke and Benny Lauth fulfilling their potential.

HANSA ROSTOCK
COACH: Frank Pagelsdorf
KEY ARRIVALS: Wachter (Hamburg)
KEY DEPARTURES: Gledson (Stuttgart), Schober (Schalke)
PREDICTION: Back in the top flight after an absence of two years. For all the know-how of coach Pagelsdorf, leadership in midfield of Stefan Beinlich and goalscoring ability of Enrico Kern, the easterners could well struggle.

HERTHA BERLIN
COACH: Lucien Favre
KEY ARRIVALS: Drobny (Bochum), Lucio (Gremio)
KEY DEPARTURES: Basturk (Stuttgart), Dejagah (Wolfsburg)
PREDICTION: New Swiss boss Favre has a massive job in front of him. While Hertha have a decent amount of talent, they are notoriously inconsistent. They should do better than last term's mid-table slot but it probably won't be by much.

KARLSRUHE
COACH: Edmund Becker
KEY ARRIVALS: Gorlitz (Bayern Munich), Hajnal (Kaiserslautern), Iashvili (Freiburg), Timm (Greuther Furth)
KEY DEPARTURES: Auer (Bochum)
PREDICTION: Ran away with the second division last term and their attacking verve may well take many in the Bundesliga by surprise. Watch out for German-Italian attacking midfielder Giovanni Federico.

NURNBERG
COACH: Hans Meyer
KEY ARRIVALS: Adler (1860 Munich), Blazek (Sparta Prague), Haristeas (Feyenoord), Jacobsen (FC Copenhagen), Misimovic (Bochum)
KEY DEPARTURES: Schafer (Stuttgart), Schroth (1860 Munich)
PREDICTION: The German Cup holders are arguably the most improved team in the country. With the canny Meyer at the helm, they are a match for anyone on their day and should at least make the UEFA Cup places.

SCHALKE
COACH: Mirko Slomka
KEY ARRIVALS: Jones (Frankfurt), Rakitic (Basle), Schober (Rostock), Westermann (Bielefeld)
KEY DEPARTURES: Hamit Altintop (Bayern Munich), Lincoln (Galatasaray)
PREDICTION: The Gelsenkirchen club have more than enough quality and depth in their squad to make the Champions League cut. But as they showed last season, they do not cope well when leading the pack.

STUTTGART
COACH: Armin Veh
KEY ARRIVALS: Basturk (Hertha), Ewerthon (Zaragoza), Gledson (Rostock), Schafer (Nurnberg)
KEY DEPARTURES: Bierofka (1860 Munich), Hildebrand (Valencia), Streller (Basle)
PREDICTION: Even champions need to reinforce and the *Stuttgarter* simply have not strengthened enough to stay on top of the pile. All the same, with youngsters of the calibre of Thomas Hitzlsperger, Mario Gomez, Serdar Tasci and Sami Khedira, they will not fall far short.

WERDER BREMEN
COACH: Thomas Schaaf
KEY ARRIVALS: Carlos Alberto (Corinthians)
KEY DEPARTURES: Klose (Bayern Munich)
PREDICTION: A sound bet to be Bayern's closest rivals. Though striker Miroslav Klose will be missed, they still have plenty firepower courtesy of Diego, Aaron Hunt and Markus Rosenberg.

WOLFSBURG
COACH: Felix Magath
KEY ARRIVALS: Dejagah (Hertha), Munteanu, Radu (both Cottbus), Riether (Freiburg)
KEY DEPARTURES: Hanke (Hannover), Karhan (Mainz), Klimowicz (Dortmund), Hofland (Feyenoord)
PREDICTION: Wolfsburg will be fighting fit under ex-Bayern boss and Charles Atlas devotee Magath. But the club's long-held dream of the UEFA Cup should remain just that. Mid-table at best. ●

Title fight

Six-in-a-row champions Lyon face a tough challenge from Marseille, says Howard Johnson

Watching brief...Marseille coach Albert Emon (right) runs the rule over his title contenders in a friendly

> "Much has changed at Lyon, with coach Houllier leaving and top players going too"

THANK THE LORD! The French season is about to start and for once the only important question isn't who will be finishing second to Lyon.

Although they won their sixth consecutive championship in April with six games to spare that wasn't the whole story. At the winter break, the halfway point, Lyon had accrued a massive 50 points from 19 games, dropping just seven. But in the second half of the season they dropped no fewer than 26. The team's football, so enchanting and enthralling in the autumn, ended up turbid and stuttering as rumours of dressing-room unrest began to circulate. There then followed an unseemly spat in the French press between captain Juninho Pernambucano and Sidney Govou, the latter claiming the skipper was being treated with kid gloves. The official line is that everybody is best of friends again. We'll see.

What we do know for certain is that much has changed at the champions. For a start, coach Gerard Houllier has departed, saying he's taking a year out to recharge his batteries amid rumours that he'll come back as the French FA's technical director. His replacement is Alain Perrin, who made such a hash of it in England with Portsmouth but who led Sochaux to the French Cup last term with a shoot-out victory against Marseille.

Then there are the big changes in the squad. The entire left flank has departed – full-back Eric Abidal to Barcelona and wide man Florent Malouda to Chelsea. Midfield linchpin Tiago has also hopped it, to Juventus. There have been new recruits, though. The Lille duo of Mathieu Bodmer and Kader Keita, two of the division's best performers last season, have been brought in, as well as Italian World Cup winner Fabio Grosso from Internazionale.

But what should make the new campaign especially interesting is that Marseille have been doing some

good-looking business of their own. While they lost their star turn, Franck Ribery, to Bayern Munich, his sale did bring in almost £18million. And so far it looks as if they've spent the money wisely. Coach Albert Emon has turned Djibril Cisse's loan move from Liverpool into a permanent deal, hammered out terms with winger Boudewijn Zenden, also from Anfield, and brought in the consistent Benoit Cheyrou from Auxerre, top-class defender Gael Givet from Monaco and highly-rated attacking midfielder Karim Ziani from Sochaux.

Sound work, and it's no surprise that Marseille reckon they have their best chance in a long time of giving Lyon a proper run for their championship money. Few would disagree with them, either.

Pressure to deliver

Things have been much quieter in the capital, at Paul Le Guen's Paris Saint-Germain. No big names have been brought in (ever heard of Rennes' defensive midfielder Gregory Bourillon?) and the club have lost Edouard Cisse to Besiktas and central defender David Rozehnal to Newcastle. After a disastrous season last term, when they finished only 15th, Le Guen will be under enormous pressure to deliver, but while PSG will undoubtedly be stronger this campaign, they don't look capable of challenging either Lyon or Marseille.

Elsewhere, it's been the coaching merry-go-round that has been of most interest, with no appointment more controversial than that of Guy Roux at Lens, replacing Francis Gillot. Eyebrows were raised when the veteran left his behind-the-scenes position at his beloved Auxerre to take up the post, not least because he'd been an advocate of coaches being put out to grass no later than 65. Roux is 68.

League Cup holders Bordeaux appointed former France defender Laurent Blanc as coach after they lost Ricardo to Monaco, who had relieved Laurent Banide of his duties. Saint-Etienne, Le Mans, Sochaux and Strasbourg all have new coaches, too. The latter were promoted with former France striker Jean-Pierre Papin at the helm. But it's Jean-Marc Furlan, boss of second division-bound Troyes last term, who is in charge now.

Discuss this at worldsoccer.com/forums
worldsoccer.com

FIVE TO WATCH

Absolutely Fabio...Italy's Grosso (right) with Lyon team-mate Patrick Muller

FABIO GROSSO
(Lyon)
The man who scored the winning penalty of the 2006 World Cup Final for Italy against France now finds himself gracing Ligue 1 after a stop-start season with Internazionale. It won't be easy for Grosso to fill the shoes of Barcelona-bound Eric Abidal at left-back but he does have class.

Marseille favourite...Nasri

Power and finesse...Elmander

JOHAN ELMANDER
(Toulouse)
The former Brondby centre-forward was the revelation of last season and his hat-trick on the last day ensured Toulouse finished third to take a Champions League berth. Elmander has power, finesse and an unerring eye for goal. It's a surprise that he hasn't been snapped up by a bigger club.

SAMIR NASRI
(Marseille)
A Marseille local and the darling of the Velodrome. Nasri earned his first senior international cap last season, aged just 19, and it was just reward for his sparkling league performances.

Top-drawer displays...Matuidi

The challenge now is to reproduce such form again, and consistently.

BLAISE MATUIDI
(Saint-Etienne)
The 20-year-old turned in plenty of top-drawer performances for relegated Troyes last season, but it will be a different proposition performing for one of France's big clubs in the notoriously intimidating "Chaudron", the Cauldron. Matuidi has great maturity, though, and the fact a host of French clubs wanted his signature proves his quality.

On the trophy trail...Sable

JULIEN SABLE
(Lens)
The skipper ended his 12-year relationship with Saint-Etienne by signing for Lens, saying he was joining a club with a history of winning honours. Lens haven't actually lifted a trophy since 1999, and big things are expected of the dynamic midfielder.

TEAM BY TEAM

Modibo Maiga, Le Mans

David Bellion, Bordeaux

Coach Guy Roux at Lens

AUXERRE
COACH: Jean Fernandez
KEY ARRIVALS: Maoulida (Marseille), Marcos Antonio (Uniao Leiria), Langil (Nimes), Tamas (Spartak Moscow)
KEY DEPARTURES: Cheyrou (Marseille), Kaboul (Tottenham), Akale (Lens), Cool (retired)
PREDICTION: Auxerre finished in mid-table obscurity last season. With striker Toifilou Maoulida now on board they'll be hoping for more goals, but don't expect a dramatic upturn in fortunes.

BORDEAUX
COACH: Laurent Blanc
KEY ARRIVALS: Bellion (Nice), Chalme (Lille), Jussie (Lens)
KEY DEPARTURES: Dalmat (Sochaux), Darcheville (Rangers), Faubert (West Ham), Mavuba (Villarreal), Cid (Bolton)
PREDICTION: Blanc has his work cut out in his first head coach job. Bordeaux have lost several key players and a European place is the best they can hope for.

CAEN
COACH: Franck Dumas
KEY ARRIVALS: Boucansaud, Nivet (both Troyes), Eluchans (Independiente), Svensson (Rangers)
KEY DEPARTURES: Ben Askar (Al Shamal), Valero (Nimes)
PREDICTION: It's hard to see anything but a long, hard season for this promoted outfit. They have heart but lack class.

LE MANS
COACH: Rudi Garcia
KEY ARRIVALS: Camara (Parma), Maiga (Raja Casablanca), Traore (Ajaccio)
KEY DEPARTURES: Bangoura (Kyiv Dynamo), Bonnart (Marseille), Fanchone (Strasbourg), Thomas (Nantes)
PREDICTION: Le Mans look a solid, dependable, mid-table outfit. The biggest problem facing new coach Garcia is replacing prolific striker Ismael Bangoura.

LENS
COACH: Guy Roux
KEY ARRIVALS: Akale (Auxerre), Sable (Saint-Etienne), Aubey (Toulouse), Runje (Besiktas)
KEY DEPARTURES: Jussie (Bordeaux), Chabbert (Amiens), Keita (Sevilla)
PREDICTION: Can veteran coach Roux work his magic with ambitious Lens, who fell away badly at the end of last season? Probably, especially with a number of decent new recruits. Reaching the Champions League will be the aim.

LILLE
COACH: Claude Puel
KEY ARRIVALS: Beria (Metz), Yanes (Independiente)
KEY DEPARTURES: Bodmer, Keita (both Lyon), Chalme (Bordeaux), Schmitz (Birmingham), Tavlaridis (Saint-Etienne)
PREDICTION: Finished only 10th last term and have now lost a number of key players. Canny as coach Puel is, this will be a campaign of consolidation at best.

LORIENT
COACH: Christian Gourcuff
KEY ARRIVALS: Cantareil (Marseille), Marin (Sedan), Robert (Guingamp), Vahirua (Nice)
KEY DEPARTURES: Gignac (Toulouse), Moullec (Nantes), Yesso (Pau), Marlet (released)
PREDICTION: Lorient comfortably survived last term and there won't be any complaints if they can do the same again.

LYON
COACH: Alain Perrin
KEY ARRIVALS: Bodmer, Keita (both Lille), Grosso (Inter), Belhadj (Sedan)
KEY DEPARTURES: Abidal (Barcelona), Malouda (Chelsea), Berthod (Monaco), Tiago (Juventus), Cacapa (released)
PREDICTION: Could Lyon's grip on the title finally be loosened? The club, now under Perrin, still have a powerful squad, and signings Mathieu Bodmer and Kader Keita are no mugs. But there is unrest in the camp, and Marseille are stronger.

MARSEILLE
COACH: Albert Emon
KEY ARRIVALS: Cisse, Zenden (both Liverpool), Bonnart (Le Mans), Cheyrou (Auxerre), Faty (Rennes), Givet (Monaco), Ziani (Sochaux)
KEY DEPARTURES: Ribery (Bayern Munich), Luyindula (PSG), Maoulida (Auxerre), Pagis (Rennes)
PREDICTION: Marseille have their best squad in a long time and have finally found some coaching stability with Emon. A strong title challenge is a real possibility.

METZ
COACH: Francis De Taddeo
KEY ARRIVALS: Barbosa (Troyes), Fejsa (Hajduk Kula), Mendy (Paris FC), Trivino (Creteil)
KEY DEPARTURES: Beria (Lille), Contout (Amiens), Gomez (Maastricht), Walasiak (Standard Liege)
PREDICTION: The second division champions are enough of a powerhouse to

Kader Keita, Lyon

Karim Ziani, Marseille (left)

Jeremy Berthod, Monaco

believe they can survive this season with something to spare.

MONACO
COACH: Ricardo
KEY ARRIVALS: Berthod (Lyon)
KEY DEPARTURES: Toure (Barcelona), Dos Santos (Strasbourg), Gigliotti (Saint-Etienne), Givet (Marseille), Joneleit (Hibernian), Warmuz (retired)
PREDICTION: A spineless outfit last season and they have now lost their best players, Yaya Toure and Gael Givet. Notoriously rigorous coach Ricardo has been brought in from Bordeaux, and he should make Monaco harder to beat.

NANCY
COACH: Pablo Correa
KEY ARRIVALS: Macaluso (River Plate)
KEY DEPARTURES: Lecluse (Angers), Sapina (Mouscron)
PREDICTION: Finished 13th last term and a similar scenario is likely.

NICE
COACH: Frederic Antonetti
KEY ARRIVALS: Hellebuyck (PSG)
KEY DEPARTURES: Bellion (Bordeaux), Vahirua (Lorient), Varrault (Saint-Etienne), Yahia (Bochum)
PREDICTION: Nice were looking over their shoulders at the drop zone all last season and the lack of a radical overhaul means it could be same again this time.

PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN
COACH: Paul Le Guen
KEY ARRIVALS: Digard (Le Havre), Luyindula (Marseille), Bourillon (Rennes)
KEY DEPARTURES: Cisse (Besiktas), Hellebuyck (Nice), Rozehnal (Newcastle)
PREDICTION: The pressure's on. Coach Le Guen needs PSG to be competing for the title this season – nothing less will do for a club who have been dismal for the past two seasons. It's possible, but we wouldn't bet on it.

RENNES
COACH: Pierre Dreossi
KEY ARRIVALS: Hansson (Heerenveen), Luzi (Charleroi), Pagis (Marseille)
KEY DEPARTURES: Faty (Marseille), Melchiot (Wigan), Mvuemba, Utaka (both Portsmouth)
PREDICTION: Finished a very creditable fourth last season, but have lost a number of key players, and though striker Mickael Pagis is a decent signing, Rennes will do well to better last term's showing.

SAINT-ETIENNE
COACH: Laurent Roussey
KEY ARRIVALS: Gigliotti (Monaco), Matuidi (Troyes), Tavlaridis (Lille), Varrault (Nice)
KEY DEPARTURES: Ilunga (Toulouse), Sable (Lens), Sarr (Troyes)
PREDICTION: There's a new coach, but we've heard the talk of a resurgence many times before, without it happening. A European place would be a decent result.

SOCHAUX
COACH: Frederic Hantz
KEY ARRIVALS: Dalmat (Bordeaux), Jokic (Gorica), Mathis (Auxerre)
KEY DEPARTURES: Leroy (released), Ziani (Marseille), Buhler (Sion), Brunel (Angers)
PREDICTION: Alain Perrin did a fine job last term, steering Sochaux to the French Cup and a seventh-place league finish. Ex-Le Mans boss Hantz is up against it to better that; mid-table is more likely.

STRASBOURG
COACH: Jean-Marc Furlan
KEY ARRIVALS: Dos Santos (Monaco), Fanchone (Le Mans), Paisley (Troyes)
KEY DEPARTURES: Assami (Istres), Deroff (Guingamp), Krebs (Hannover)
PREDICTION: Coach Furlan was relegated with Troyes, but has bounced back with Strasbourg after Jean-Pierre Papin's departure. Survival will be the only objective, and maybe Furlan's relegation experience will help them through. It'll be touch and go, though.

TOULOUSE
COACH: Elie Baup
KEY ARRIVALS: Gignac (Lorient), Ilunga (Saint-Etienne), Jonsson (Elfsborg), Riou (Istres)
KEY DEPARTURES: Aubey (Lens), Ayasse (Reims), Benvegnu (Amiens), Robic (Tours)
PREDICTION: The surprise Champions League qualifiers will be stretched by their Euro commitments, so a repeat of their third-place finish looks doubtful.

VALENCIENNES
COACH: Antoine Kombouare
KEY ARRIVALS: Audel (Lille), Sanchez (River Plate, Uru)
KEY DEPARTURES: Bourgeois (Dijon), Flachez (Grenoble), Paauwe (Gladbach)
PREDICTION: Plucky Valenciennes did brilliantly to hang on to their top-flight status last time, but relegation is still a very real possibility. ●

SWITZERLAND

Internal differences

Nick Bidwell reports on the co-hosts' struggle to field a harmonious side

SWITZERLAND BOSS Kobi Kuhn used to enjoy the image of a kindly old grandfather. Not any more. His unceremonious exclusion of skipper Johann Vogel in March was proof that the 63-year-old had teeth and was prepared to bare them to anyone he thought of as a passenger or disruptive influence.

In the usually tranquil Swiss footballing waters, the ditching of Vogel and the installation of Borussia Dortmund striker Alex Frei as captain instead created big waves, with coach and ex-skipper exchanging barbs via the media.

"I need people who give the maximum, and that's not the case with Johann," Kuhn declared. "The chemistry with him was no longer right, either on or off the pitch."

Vogel countered: "I've the impression that he [Kuhn] wants to save his neck and was looking for a scapegoat. He was feeling under threat after three defeats in a row [2-1 in Austria, 2-1 at home to Brazil and 3-1 in Germany] and wanted to show he's still in charge. It's really a sign of weakness."

Antagonistic

Only 15 months away from co-hosting Euro 2008, a blazing row was just what the Swiss did not need. But perhaps this was a boil that simply had to be lanced. Vogel, a French-Swiss, had been accused in some quarters of being antagonistic to the German speakers in the squad and allegedly came to blows with Frei after the team's penalty shoot-out loss to Ukraine in the second round of last year's World Cup. Kuhn and Vogel also had tactical differences, and the midfielder's cause was further undermined by his lack of playing time at club side Real Betis.

Former captain Murat Yakin believes Kuhn will emerge from the affair with enhanced authority. That may be, but Kuhn has certainly lost a degree of popularity with the public and media since guiding the Swiss to the last 16 of the Germany World Cup without conceding a goal. Until last summer, Kuhn's side were renowned for their drive and organisation. But antagonism has been to the fore over the past 12 months and, for the first time in his seven-year reign, Kuhn felt the heat. Hence the Vogel bombshell and the coach's successful plea for a four-man committee to support him during the build-up to the European Championship. The first expedition without Vogel, to Florida in March, brought mixed results: a 2-0 win against Jamaica and a 3-1 defeat against Colombia. But at least they finished 2006-07 on a relative high, fighting back to draw 1-1 with Argentina in Basle in early June, Marco Streller hitting the equaliser.

On the mark...Streller is mobbed after his goal against Argentina

Kuhn's 4-4-1-1 formation worked well in the latter game and he had to be especially satisfied with the fine individual performances of new defensive midfielder Gokhan Inler, centre-back Patrick Muller and keeper Diego Benaglio, who may have moved ahead of Pascal Zuberbuhler and Fabio Coltorti in the battle for the No 1 shirt.

"That we stood firm against a world-class team such as Argentina is the best compliment I can pay my side," Kuhn said. "The players showed lots of responsibility and will. I'm confident we've got over our post-World Cup depression. Compared to six months ago, we've made a big step forward."

"The Vogel-Kuhn row was just what the Swiss didn't need, 15 months before the finals kick off"

Leader...Senderos stops Messi

THE COACH

Jakob "Kobi" Kuhn

A Swiss footballing institution. Won 63 caps as a cultured midfielder and has had a highly successful stint as national coach since 2001, a golden era marked by qualification for Euro 2004 and last year's World Cup. A reserved and

Rich rewards...Kuhn

deliberate character, Kuhn cuts something of an anachronistic figure in today's loud and hectic game. But he certainly knows his tactical onions and has reaped rich rewards with his faith in solidarity and discipline.

KEY PLAYERS

Alexander Frei

Prolific striker handed the captain's armband after Johann Vogel became

Tough job as skipper...Frei

persona non grata and may have his work cut out bridging the chasm that has opened up between the squad's French and German contingents. He is not particularly pacy or physically powerful but more than compensates with his nose for a chance, cute movement and accuracy of shot. The Dortmund front man is Switzerland's current player of the year.

Philippe Senderos

The fact that the young centre-back of Serb and Spanish extraction is still far from assured of a regular spot in the Arsenal first team is a problem. Yet he remains a vital part of the plans of

Dynamic left-back...Magnin

Kuhn, who is often heard singing the praises of his leadership qualities. Senderos was a precocious talent, skippering the Swiss Under-15 side aged 13, making his pro debut for Servette at 16, and still a teenager when he began life in the Premiership.

Ludovic Magnin

Vice-captain and dynamic left-back whose booming free-kicks also offer an attacking threat. Confident and ebullient, he perfectly symbolises a Swiss side that no longer have an inferiority complex. Magnin looked to be surplus to requirements at Stuttgart last season only to come good during their Bundesliga title run-in. ●

SQUAD

	CLUB	DOB	CAPS	GOALS
GOALKEEPERS				
Diego BENAGLIO	Nacional (Por)	08.09.83	6	0
Fabio COLTORTI	Grasshopper	03.12.80	6	0
Pascal ZUBERBUHLER	Neuchatel Xamax	08.01.71	48	0
DEFENDERS				
Valon BEHRAMI	Lazio (Ita)	19.04.85	10	1
Philipp DEGEN	Borussia Dortmund (Ger)	15.02.83	26	0
Johan DJOUROU	Arsenal (Eng)	18.01.87	11	0
Stephane GRICHTING	Auxerre (Fra)	30.03.79	12	0
Stephan LICHTSTEINER	Lille (Fra)	16.01.84	3	0
Ludovic MAGNIN	Stuttgart (Ger)	20.04.79	42	2
Patrick MULLER	Lyon (Fra)	17.12.76	76	3
Philippe SENDEROS	Arsenal (Eng)	14.02.85	20	3
Boris SMILJANIC	Grasshopper	28.09.76	3	0
Christoph SPYCHER	Eintracht Frankfurt (Ger)	30.03.78	30	0
MIDFIELDERS				
Tranquillo BARNETTA	Bayer Leverkusen (Ger)	22.05.85	26	3
Ricardo CABANAS	Grasshopper	17.01.79	47	4
David DEGEN	Monchengladbach (Ger)	15.02.83	5	0
Blerim DZEMAILI	Zurich	12.04.86	7	0
Daniel GYGAX	Metz (Fra)	28.08.81	29	5
Benjamin HUGGEL	Basle	07.07.77	19	0
Gokhan INLER	Udinese (Ita)	27.06.84	7	1
Xavier MARGAIRAZ	Osasuna (Spa)	07.01.84	10	1
Raphael WICKY	Hamburg (Ger)	26.04.77	75	1
Hakan YAKIN	Young Boys	22.02.77	56	14
FORWARDS				
Alexander FREI	Borussia Dortmund (Ger)	15.07.79	56	32
Mauro LUSTRINELLI	Lucerne	26.02.76	11	0
Blaise N'KUFO	Twente (Hol)	25.05.75	7	1
Alberto REGAZZONI	Sion	04.05.83	3	0
Marco STRELLER	Basle	18.06.81	22	8
Johan VONLANTHEN	Salzburg (Aut)	01.02.86	22	5

All together now...Swiss players before a friendly in Germany

Breaking out

Mexico's most talented players are abandoning the "golden cage" of the domestic league for the challenge of Europe

AFTER LOSING THE Final of the Gold Cup against the United States in June, Mexico's national coach, Hugo Sanchez, found himself in a difficult situation. Criticised by the media for failing to fulfil his promise of winning the CONCACAF tournament, he had to play the opening match of the Copa America against Brazil in Venezuela just three days later without Europe-based trio Pavel Pardo, Ricardo Osorio and Carlos Salcido, who "needed a rest". The coach was also missing all-time top goalscorer Jared Borgetti because of injury.

Sanchez thus decided to take a big gamble and field a mainly young, inexperienced side against the strongly-fancied Brazilians. Apart from captain Rafael Marquez, Gerardo Torrado and Ramon Morales, no Mexican player on the field in Puerto Ordaz had worn the *Tricolor* shirt more than 15 times.

Ninety minutes later, the whole continent was in shock after Mexico had produced their best performance under the former Real Madrid striker, outplaying the eventual champions on their way to a 2-0 win. Nery Castillo had put the Mexicans ahead with a magnificent goal – lobbing the ball over Juan's head before slotting delightfully past Doni – and 22-year-old America goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa had produced a string of superb saves after Morales had put Mexico further ahead with a stunning free-kick.

> "We have to give players international experience if we are to win the World Cup"
>
> *National coach Hugo Sanchez*

The team finally finished third, beating Uruguay in the play-off after losing to Argentina in the semi-finals. Along with Ochoa and Castillo, the Mexican revelations were a trio from league champions Pachuca – Juan Carlos Cacho, Fausto Pinto and Jaime Correa, who had never played in an international competition before – and Guadalajara's Jonny Magallon, who was playing in the second division just two years ago.

Bogey side

At the same time, the Mexican Under-20 team, featuring Barcelona's Giovanni Dos Santos and Arsenal's Carlos Vela, won four matches in a row at the World Cup in Canada – the first time any Mexican side had achieved this in a major international finals. Frustratingly, they bowed out 1-0 to Argentina, clearly the country's bogey side, but only from a Julio Dominguez own goal.

The youngsters' impressive showing prompted the Mexican media to urge Sanchez to give Vela, Dos Santos, Cruz Azul midfielder Cesar Villaluz and Guadalajara defender Patricio Araujo a chance in the senior side. And the coach is seriously considering doing so in friendlies later this year.

On June 10, Atlas announced they had accepted a £5million offer from Deportivo La Coruna for 20-year-old winger Andres Guardado. The deal smashed the record for a Mexican-to-Europe transfer, set by Marquez, another Atlas academy graduate, when he joined Monaco for £2.5m in 1999.

The Guardado transfer continued a trend that started after last year's World Cup. Before the tournament, the Mexican League was an anomaly in the Americas. Its financially powerful clubs, almost all of them backed by huge domestic corporations, were importers of talent rather than exporters.

Year after year, the best South American players who were unable to find a place at a top European club headed instead to Mexico, where they could receive salaries up to 10 times bigger than in their homeland and enjoy a friendly atmosphere away from the pressures of the rest of the continental media and the violence of the hooligan gangs.

However, these conducive conditions meant that the young Mexican talent were happy to stay put, not feeling the urge to prove their worth abroad. Generations of Mexican footballers have felt so comfortable in their golden cage that they refused to sacrifice their king-like status to fight for a place abroad. The few that did venture out usually came back after a season of homesickness.

But football globalisation slowly changed the situation. Thanks to TV coverage, European clubs began to discover the Mexican market, while the local young players started dreaming of the glamour of the Premiership, Serie A or La Liga. Furthermore, as the Mexican national team have crashed out in the last 16 of every World Cup since 1994, the local media began to realise that there was something missing in the League's status quo.

After the 2006 finals, four Mexican internationals joined Marquez as the country's representatives in Europe. Osorio and Pardo signed for Stuttgart, Salcido joined PSV Eindhoven and Francisco Fonseca moved to Benfica. Only the latter failed, hastily returning to Mexico after six months. The rest enjoyed excellent seasons, winning the German and Dutch leagues respectively.

And it was not just them. At the same time, Dos Santos emerged from the junior ranks at Barcelona, impressing in the friendly matches he played with the first team, and Vela was snapped up by Arsenal. Both had spearheaded the Mexican Under-17 team that won the 2005 world championship in Peru.

Meanwhile, Castillo, born in Mexico to Uruguayan parents and playing for Olympiakos in Greece since the age of 14, was convinced by Sanchez to choose the *Tricolor* after flirting with all three countries for a while. Suddenly, Mexican fans and

Growing presence...Fernando Arce gets the better of Brazil's Gilberto Silva during Mexico's 2-0 Copa America win

media are dreaming of a golden generation for South Africa 2010. An unprecedented eight internationals are plying their trade abroad, and they could be joined by several other young prospects, such as Ochoa, Villaluz and Araujo, who have already been linked with moves abroad.

New power

All this confirms the Mexican League's status as the new power in Latin American football. It has firmly installed itself among the top three leagues, alongside those in Argentina and Brazil. Mexico's teams enjoy long runs in the Libertadores Cup year after year, disposing of top South American sides along the way, and Pachuca became the first team to win a major tournament staged by a confederation other than its own when they lifted the Sudamericana Cup last December. However, bizarrely, the Mexican league market continues to be largely uncharted territory for European clubs. While top sides send scout after scout to watch matches in South America, few think of setting their sights to the north. At the same time, Mexican clubs aren't that keen to let their stars go, as their financial status allows them to set the price-tags high enough to scare off clubs unwilling to pay millions for "unknown" players.

Even so, Mexican fans are keen to see their players triumph in foreign lands, even if that means weakening and unbalancing a powerful league, in which, for the imminent opening championship no fewer than 10 of the 18 teams have realistic title aspirations.

However, this will not happen, at least in the short term. For the moment, the Mexican League looks as if it will be as exciting as it has been over the past few years, with the new crop of local talent emerging and the arrival of exciting foreign signings such as former Argentinian internationals Federico Insua and Lucas Castroman (by America), Paraguayan star Carlos Bonet (Cruz Azul) and Chilean sensation Humberto Suazo (Monterrey).

Sanchez hopes the Mexican migration to Europe will continue: "Our rivals have 800 or 900 swords," he says, referring to the large amount of Brazilian and Argentinian players across the Atlantic. "We need to have, if not as many, at least more weapons to fight on equal terms. We have the talent and the will to win, but we also have to give players international experience if we're dreaming of winning the next World Cup."

Little by little, Mexico seems to be awakening to this call to arms.

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Monterrey, Atlas, Cruz Azul... a guide to the top-division teams

1 SANTOS LAGUNA
Spent £5million last season in a bid to preserve their top-flight status and achieved it on a dramatic last weekend. Still in a precarious position for the 2007-08 season, however.

2 MONTERREY
Big northern club who, like local rivals Tigres, spend a fortune each season trying to win the title. Despite their recent failures, their 2003 crown still gives them an edge over their city adversaries.

3 TIGRES
The big-spending club, owned by giant cement enterprise Cemex, have not won the championship since 1982. The club have just hired successful Argentinian coach Americo Gallego in yet another title bid.

4 NECAXA
A team with a long tradition and one of the three top-division sides owned by Televisa, the biggest media enterprise in Latin America. Despite huge success in the 1990s, Necaxa had to leave Mexico City for Aguascalientes to enlarge their fan base.

5 SAN LUIS
The modest regional outfit, the smallest of the Televisa-owned sides, survive largely thanks to players rejected by "big brothers" America and Necaxa. The club have flirted with relegation in the past two seasons.

6 GUADALAJARA
The most popular team in the country. "Chivas" represent the provinces against the power of the capital, although most of their supporters in fact hail from Mexico City. The club have a policy of fielding only Mexican players.

7 ATLAS
Have a huge following in their home city of Guadalajara, despite not having won the League in more than 50 years. A lot of the fans are drawn from the upper classes. The club are well known for their attacking style and their magnificent youth academy.

8 TECOS UAG
Guadalajara's third team, they represent the city's right-wing Autonomic University. Tecos have the smallest fan base in the top flight, surviving instead thanks to an astute transfer policy.

9 PACHUCA
Mexico's oldest club and the most successful in recent times. They have won five domestic championships in the past eight years, this year's CONCACAF Champions Cup and the Sudamericana Cup in 2006, becoming the first Mexican side to achieve success in a CONMEBOL tournament.

10 MORELIA
Owned by Television Azteca, the second biggest television enterprise in the country. Morelia were successful around the turn of the decade but have failed to impress since.

11 TOLUCA
The best team in Mexico a few years ago, winning their last championship in 2005. This season they begin a new era under former Argentina boss Jose Pekerman.

12 AMERICA
The Televisa-owned club are the richest in Mexico. They have spent big again this summer, bringing in two impressive new recruits – Argentinians Lucas Castroman and Federico Insua.

13 CRUZ AZUL
The third biggest team in the country, Cruz Azul enjoyed tremendous success in the 1970s, winning seven league titles. However, they have not won a championship since 1997 despite having some of the best players in the country.

14 PUMAS UNAM
The fourth biggest team in the country and they represent the intellectual class. The club have one of the best youth academies in the League and a passionate fan base.

15 PUEBLA
Back in the top division after three years away. With a limited budget and a weak squad, their presence in the top flight may well be short-lived.

16 VERACRUZ
The magnificent fans have had to endure constant failure since the golden era of the 1950s. Once again they will be fighting to avoid relegation this season.

17 JAGUARES
Before Atlante's relocation to Cancun, Jaguares were the flag-bearers of the south-eastern part of the country. The ambitious board has spent a lot of money to make them contenders since they were formed in 2002.

18 ATLANTE
Once one of Mexico's most popular teams, Atlante have been in decline since the 1940s, reaching a low last season, after which they had to move to Cancun from Mexico City to enlarge their fan base.

The movers and shakers in Mexican football

● DECIO DE MARIA
When Justino Compean was elected FA president to replace Alberto De la Torre, general secretary De Maria became the real man in charge. De Maria has a very close relationship with major broadcaster Televisa, of which Compean was an employee.

● ENRIQUE MEZA
Won three titles with Toluca but then had unsuccessful stints with the national team, Atlas and Cruz Azul. He has enjoyed a revival with Pachuca, whom he has steered to a league title, a Sudamericana Cup and a CONCACAF Champions Cup.

● FEDERICO INSUA
The Argentinian playmaker has a double responsibility on his shoulders. He must justify the £2.5million America paid for him – a club record fee – and replace USA-bound legend Cuauhtemoc Blanco in the fans' hearts.

● ANDRES GUARDADO
Deportivo La Coruna recently smashed the record transfer fee for a Mexican league player when buying the left-winger from Atlas for £5million. Guardado is the latest Mexican star to sign for a top European side, raising the number to eight.

● ADOLFO BAUTISTA
A favourite with Guadalajara fans and a key part of the team's 2006 closing championship triumph. However, Bautista fell out with coach Jose Manuel De la Torre last season. When De la Torre issued a "him or me" ultimatum, owner Jorge Vergara chose Bautista but was outvoted by the board and had to transfer "Bofo" to Jaguares.

● HUGO SANCHEZ
The national coach had mixed results in his first two tournaments in charge. Mexico played dismally at the CONCACAF Gold Cup but nevertheless reached the Final, which they lost to the USA. However, the critics were silenced with a solid Copa America, in which the team finished third.

● SALVADOR CARMONA
The former Mexican international defender was given a lifetime ban after failing a second consecutive dope test. Despite knowing the results of the test, the Cruz Azul board decided to field him in the closing championship semi-final against Pachuca, a decision that led to the club's expulsion from the tournament.

● JORGE VERGARA
After buying Saprissa in Costa Rica and Chivas USA, the controversial Guadalajara owner has been looking to expand his football empire by acquiring a Spanish team. However, he will probably have to wait yet another year after failing to reach an agreement with second division outfit Malaga.

BACKGROUND BRIEFING

Title decider...Pachuca (in white) v America in May

● Mexico's Primera Division is composed of 18 teams, who compete in two tournaments each year: the opening championship (apertura) in the autumn and the closing (clausura) in the spring. In each, the clubs play a league stage, split into three groups of six, followed by knockout play-offs.

● The champions participate in the CONCACAF Champions Cup, while special play-offs are held to determine qualifiers for the Libertadores Cup and Sudamericana Cup, Latin America's top two club competitions.

● Each year, one team is relegated on the basis of fewest points earned per match over the previous three seasons. This generally helps to ensure that the country's well-supported clubs are not relegated because of one poor season.

Tomas PEKHART

CZECH REPUBLIC

Tall striker aiming for the top at Spurs

FORMER CZECH REPUBLIC midfielder Vladimir Smicer believes teenage compatriot Tomas Pekhart has what it takes to establish himself at the point of the Tottenham attack. "I hear he's been doing really well for the reserves and I can easily imagine him as a Premiership player," says the former Liverpool player, who moved back to Slavia Prague this summer from Bordeaux. "Tomas has everything it takes to make the grade in English football. It's vital to be durable in the Premiership, and with his great height, physical strength and good athletic quality, he certainly fits the bill. He knows where the goal is, moves intelligently off the ball, and is excellent technically. He is the complete package. People who know him well tell me he also has a fine temperament, that he is very composed on the pitch and humble off it."

Over the years, the Czechs have specialised in producing towering front men – Tomas Skuhravy, Jan Koller and Vratislav Lokvenc. Pekhart offers the same height but with a more delicate touch.

Spurs' wisdom in signing the youngster, in March 2006, quickly became apparent. Pekhart starred as the Czech Under-17s reached the Final of that year's European Championship, losing to Russia on penalties.

The forward, from west Bohemia, started out in the youth ranks of his hometown club, TJ Susice. Aged 13, he spent a season at TJ Klatovy, then, in 2003, joined Slavia Prague.

Pekhart has represented his country at every youth level from Under-16 upwards, most recently the Under-20 side that finished runners-up at the World Cup in Canada. At 18, he was the youngest player in the Czech squad and was mainly used as a supersub, but whenever he did appear he looked a class act. He also converted the decisive penalty in his side's shoot-out victory over Spain in the quarter-finals.

"This sort of tournament gives you invaluable experience; it's a wonderful education," Pekhart declared. "I also have the good fortune to be at one of the best English clubs and am learning every day."

Nick Bidwell

FACT FILE

Country Czech Republic
Club Tottenham (Eng)
Born May 26, 1989, in Susice
Previous clubs TJ Susice, TJ Klatovy, Slavia Prague

SIX OF THE BEST

Stars of the Libertadores Cup

Damian ESCUDERO

Velez Sarsfield; 20.04.87

Found himself at the centre of a controversy at the end of last year when Velez refused to release him for the South American Under-20 Championship. Come the Libertadores it quickly became apparent why his club were so keen to protect him from burn-out. The dynamism Escudero brought to left midfield made him a key part of the side. He was strong in possession and his surges often ended with accurate, well-struck shots – the youngster hit four goals in the competition.

Pablo LEDESMA

Boca Juniors; 04.02.84

A driving force down the right side of midfield for Libertadores winners Boca. He strikes the ball well and has the lung power to break into the penalty area – as highlighted twice in the latter stages of the competition. He scored a clever close-range flick against Colombia's Cucuta in the semi-final first leg and a brave header at the end of the first leg of the Final, against Gremio of Brazil.

CARLOS EDUARDO

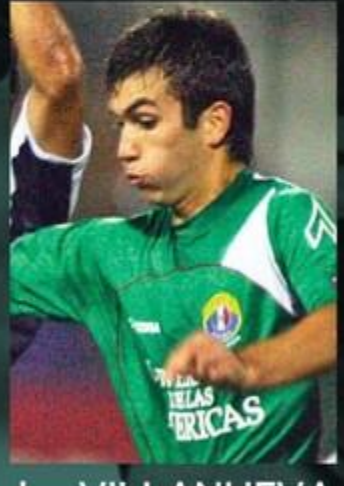
Gremio; 18.07.87

The lithe left-sided striker gave a disappointing display in the second leg of the Final but that does not erase the positive impression made earlier in the tournament. He was full of clever footwork, rapid turns and dangerous crosses. Gremio's latest home-grown hope, he scored only one goal in the Libertadores, highlighting the fact that he is more of a maker than a taker of chances.

MARCOS AURELIO

Santos; 26.10.84

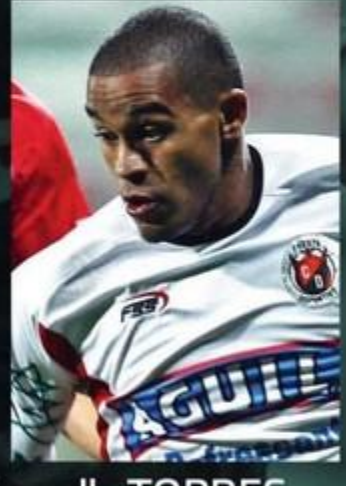
Nippy little striker who confirmed with Santos the good impression he made with Atletico Paranaense in last year's Sudamericana Cup. He is happiest working from the right flank, very tricky in one-on-one situations, combined well with Ze Roberto, and despite his slight build was not afraid to get into the penalty area.



Carlos VILLANUEVA

Audax Italiano; 05.02.86

Left-footed playmaker who was the hub of Chile's Audax Italiano, the surprise team of the group phase, who were unlucky not to qualify for the knockout phase. Villanueva had quick players around him at full-back and up front, and it brought the best out of his elegant passing. Rewarded with a call-up to Chile's Copa America squad.



Macnelly TORRES

Cucuta; 01.11.84

Part of the Colombia squad that reached the semi-finals of the 2003 World Youth Cup and has now graduated with honours in senior football. For Cucuta in the Libertadores, the neat attacking midfielder continually split defences and put his strikers through on goal with inspired passes. He could be even more of a threat with more work on his left foot.

Tim Vickery

MARADONA AT NAPOLI | The great teams, big personalities and major talking points

Son of Naples

Paddy Agnew recalls Diego Maradona's triumphant but turbulent time at the San Paolo stadium

NAPLES IS getting ready to party. It is Sunday, May 10, 1987 and the city's football team, Napoli, stand poised on the brink of the greatest day in their history. As my train pulls into the city on a balmy, sunny morning, two American tourists in my carriage look out of the window at the sea of light-blue banners, flags, scarves and bunting that seem to adorn just about every building in sight. "Oh my, something big must be happening today," says the lady to her husband.

I smile to myself and think that not since Allied troops arrived here in September 1943, to find a city reduced to rubble and its inhabitants desperately short of food and water after a four-day insurrection against the Nazi occupation, has Naples had such reason to celebrate.

It is the penultimate match of the season and Napoli, today at home to Fiorentina, are leading the title contest by three points from Internazionale. A win will earn them two points (rather than today's three). So Napoli can wrap up the title this afternoon.

One man has made this all possible. Argentinian Diego Armando Maradona has single-handedly powered Napoli to the top of the Italian League. His stupendous genius, his ability to get team-mates to play with and for him, and his footballing intelligence have, in three seasons, proved the biggest elements in the transformation of Napoli from relegation battlers to title contenders.

Twenty-nine minutes into the first half, striker Andrea Carnevale works a clever one-two with Bruno Giordano on the edge of the Fiorentina area before scoring the game's opening goal. Even an equaliser 11 minutes later from a talented 20-year-old called Roberto Baggio fails to dampen the celebrations. In the meantime, the electronic scoreboard at the San Paolo stadium tells the wildly enthusiastic, 82,000-strong crowd that Inter are losing 1-0 away to relegation battlers Atalanta.

Laps of honour

If the two scorelines remain like this, then Napoli can even afford to lose to Fiorentina and still lift the title this afternoon. At last the final whistle blows. The score is 1-1 and Napoli are champions. Even though the moat around the San Paolo ensures there is no pitch invasion, a posse of reporters, cameramen and assorted officials still crowd the players as they set off on a series of laps of honour.

Inevitably, Maradona is the most sought-after player. Yet he shuns the reporters and the cameras, making straight for the fans, not just at both ends of the pitch but also at different points along both sides. As he comes round in front of the makeshift press box, I watch in amazement. He is totally lit up, the barrel chest defiantly thrust forward, the stocky physique looking as tough as centuries-old teak. He gestures to the Napoli fans, first clenching his fist and then opening wide his arms and blowing kisses. At one moment he is the poor boy from the gutter saying: "This one is for you." At another he is the King of Naples, demanding and receiving not just tributes but total adulation. Football is not often like this.

Afterwards, the huge press corps at the San Paolo waits anxiously for a soundbite. As is his wont, Diego keeps us waiting. Two hours after the final whistle, he finally emerges. "For me, this championship title means a lot more than winning the World Cup," he says. "I won a Junior World Cup in Tokyo and I won the World Cup in Mexico last year but on both occasions I was alone, I had no friends with me. Here, however, all my family, the city of Naples are with me, because I consider myself a son of Naples."

When one came across Maradona, it was immediately clear that this was a very different type of player, handled by very different people. Maradona was walled in by a clan of minders – brothers, sisters, mother, father, personal trainers, physios, managers, agents, PR advisers, friendly hacks and bodyguards. Common sense told you that, in spite of the clan's highly protective attitude to their man, not all of them could have been in it for the good of Diego. He was perhaps the first modern football icon-player, the first systematically to exploit, develop and market his success even as he played.

Such was the extraordinary Maradona talent that everybody wanted a slice of the action. From the military junta of generals to President Carlos Menem in his native Argentina, from world bodies such as UNICEF and FIFA, a host of multinational sponsors and the world's media to Napoli football club, the city of Naples and, last but not least, organised crime, everybody wanted in.

That he was different from other footballers, off the pitch as well as on it, soon became hard to ignore. I recall a visit to the San Paolo, on the last Sunday of 1986. Napoli beat Como

Centre of attention...Maradona before a game at Verona in 1984

"Everybody wanted a slice of the action, from the military junta in Argentina to world bodies such as UNICEF and FIFA, sponsors, the city of Naples and organised crime"

Football as art...Maradona's image adorns a Naples apartment block

2-1 to confirm their position on top of the Serie A table. After the match, along with the other journalists, I waited for Maradona to emerge for a final pre-holiday press conference.

Finally, a walking scrummage made its way down the corridors from the dressing room. Somewhere in it was Maradona. All around me, Naples-based colleagues, those whose work involved daily coverage of the club, became agitated. They pushed and shoved their way to the front, not to ask Diego a question or to push a microphone in his face, but rather to shake his hand, hug him warmly or even kiss him. If it had not already seemed obvious, it became crystal clear that the vast majority of the Neapolitan press was willing to give Maradona an easy ride. Keep us on top of Italian football, Diego, and we will turn a blind eye to your exotic nightlife, irregular living, intermittent training and questionable friendships. Later, towards the end of his Italian experience, they would not be so remiss.

Bring me sunshine... in football terms he could do no wrong

As early as 1986, a report by Napoli's *Nucleo Mobile* (Flying Squad) had drawn attention to Maradona's friendship with the Giuliano family, one of the most powerful organised crime families in the city. Police investigators discovered no fewer than 71 photos showing Maradona in the company of the Giulianos, most often at the clan HQ in Forcella.

In Maradona's early years, the Italian and Neapolitan media were either unaware or simply uninterested in speculation about links between Maradona and the Camorra, the city's Mafia-style criminal organisation. On the July 1984 day when Maradona was formally presented to the Naples public, a French journalist, Alain Chaillou, had the temerity to ask both Maradona and club owner Corrado Ferlaino about "rumours" that the Camorra had contributed to his £4million purchase fee from Barcelona. Chaillou was told by Ferlaino that his question was an "offence" against the "honest city" of Naples and he was unceremoniously shown the door.

By the end of 1986, the sports media were much more concentrated on Maradona's football. That, of course, had been the year of the player's controversial but dominant role in Argentina's World Cup win in Mexico. One reporter at that post-Como game press conference probably thought he was asking an easy first question when he called on Maradona to sum up the year just past.

"At this stage, I would say that 1986 was not the best year of my life," he said. "It brought me many good things but it also gave me some very nasty shocks."

Baby claim

It was easy enough to identify one of the "nasty shocks". It had come on September 20 when a 22-year-old unemployed accountant, Cristiana Sinagra, a good-looking blonde, had claimed that Diego was the father of her baby boy. Furthermore, she claimed that the child was the fruit of a four-month affair with Maradona, from the previous December to April.

The revelation of the Sinagra lovechild was the first tangible confirmation of the "unorthodox" life led by Maradona in Naples, although Spanish colleagues had drawn my attention to stories, carried in gossip columns and glossy magazines during Maradona's time

ITALY TURNS ON DIEGO

PLAYING ON painkillers for a badly swollen left ankle, Maradona did not have a fantastic World Cup in 1990 in Italy. Yet such was his class that he surfaced from his lethargy for fleeting moments, setting up the goal that beat Brazil in the second round and Claudio Caniggia's strike in the semi-final against Italy, which Argentina won on penalties after a 1-1 draw.

As fate would have it, the latter game was played in Naples. Diego had infuriated many Italians by remarking prior to the match that it was ironic that the rest of Italy was now calling on Neapolitans to be good Italians and get behind the team. For the rest of the year, said Diego, most Italians do not give a damn about Naples. It was close to the bone, but accurate.

Those words and Argentina's win put Diego and his team firmly on the hate list for the Final, played at the Olympic stadium in Rome. As the Argentinian anthem played, the mainly Italian fans jeered and whistled. As the TV cameras moved along the line of Argentina players, it focused on a furious Maradona, who was clearly muttering "*hijos de putana*" (sons of bitches). It was classic Diego – theatrical, passionate and scurrilous. Given all the wonderful football he had played in Italy, and given what he had done for Napoli, he deserved more from his adoptive country.

Take that...Italian players despair as Maradona hails Claudio Caniggia's semi-final goal

"He and his team were firmly on the hate list for the Final. As the Argentinian anthem played, the Italian fans jeered"

in Barcelona, reporting on his allegedly "unprofessional" lifestyle off the pitch. It was suggested that outrageous parties, if not to say orgies, were regular happenings in his luxury villa in Pedrales, outside Barcelona – especially if his long-time, live-in girlfriend Claudia Villafana happened to be out of town.

In my ignorance and innocence, I tended to dismiss such gossip from Catalonia, arguing with myself that the whole thing had been exaggerated by a Catalan press that simply could not wait to see the back of the little upstart Argentinian. Surely, it had happened only occasionally? I even recall hearing a radio interview in Italy in the autumn of 1986 during which Maradona solemnly gave his support to a national campaign against drug addiction. "If my words about drug addiction and its evils were to save one of you," he told listeners, "then that will be worth more to me than a hundred league goals for Napoli." Ten years later, with his football career

> **People say things may have turned out differently had he gone to Juventus, but he may not have prospered at a club that tied him down**

prematurely curtailed by his chronic drug addiction, Maradona admitted that he had used cocaine for the first time in Barcelona in 1982, at the age of 22. At the San Paolo on that afternoon in December 1986, I could never have imagined that the career of the world's greatest footballer would end up going down the toilet in a cloud of cocaine.

Nowadays, when former players and football critics in Italy recall Maradona, many of them speculate about how things might have turned out differently if he had moved to, say, Juventus rather than Napoli. Critics suggest that had he gone to Juventus, the autocratic club run by the Agnelli family, he would have been better protected from the outside world, from his sycophantic clan and his own worst self.

Perhaps, and, there again, perhaps not. What is certain is that Juventus would not have cut Diego the amount of slack granted him at Napoli. What is less certain is whether, by the time he arrived in European football in 1982, Diego would ever have prospered at any club that tried to tie him down. When he arrived in Naples, Maradona had asked Napoli to provide him with a house similar to the spacious villa he had just left in Catalonia. Finding somewhere with a swimming pool, tennis court and five-a-side pitch was almost impossible in Naples. In the end he settled for a comfortable, quiet but ordinary enough two-floor flat in upmarket Posillipo.

Yet Maradona's relationship with Naples and Napoli was about more than money and mutual convenience. On that title-winning Sunday in May 1987, when he called himself a "son of Naples", his words were not empty rhetoric. In many ways, Maradona and Naples were ideally suited for one another.

One of their own

For many Italians, particularly those from the richer, industrial north, Naples is a byword for just about everything that is wrong with contemporary Italy. Naples is a bustling, colourful urchin by comparison with historic, aristocratic Florence, Milan, Rome, Turin and Venice. Where the good burghers of Turin and Milan, like those of Barcelona, would have seen Maradona and his entourage as garish upstarts, Naples embraced him as "one of us", the poor kid who started out on the wrong side of the tracks and made it nonetheless.

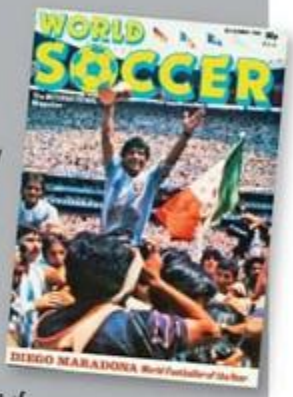
When he first arrived in Naples, more than 60,000 fans turned out for his official presentation at the San Paolo. He was, in the all-too-ephemeral sense of sporting success, the new messiah. He would deliver, he would put one over on those toffee-nosed northerners, he would ensure that the Napoli club could compete with Milan, Inter, Juventus et al. Remarkably, and this was arguably his greatest achievement, Maradona did just that. He delivered. He brought a fleeting moment of success to Naples, leading them to two league titles (the other was in 1990), with a UEFA Cup victory to boot in 1989. Neither before nor since had the football club experienced anything like it. ●

Title run...celebrations begin after the 1987 win

FROM THE ARCHIVES

"Hand of God? It was an accident"

DECEMBER 1986



DIEGO MARADONA was voted 1986 World Footballer of the Year by *World Soccer* readers. In an interview with Rino Landa, he reflected on an incredible 12 months.

Maradona remained unapologetic for the "Hand of God" goal against England at the World Cup. "You should talk to the referee rather than me," he said. "It was an accident of play, something which has not happened only to me, either. Ask Zico or Platini or Rummenigge. They will all tell you that they have scored a goal with their hand at some time or another. Should I have refused to accept the goal? Next, you will be saying that I should ask a defender's permission before I dribble round him."

This is an extract from Paddy Agnew's book Forza Italia: The Fall and Rise of Italian Football *(Ebury Press, £7.99)*

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Proud to wear the shirt?

Francesco Totti's unforced international retirement is part of a growing trend

Bowing out at the top...but Francesco Totti left it a year after the World Cup triumph to confirm he was quitting

GIANNI RIVERA, the golden boy of Milan and Italian football in the 1960s and early 1970s, was scathing about Francesco Totti's long-delayed confirmation of his national team retirement. The Roma forward had waited until a year after the World Cup triumph to say what many of us had long assumed.

Rivera, who scored 14 goals in 60 games for Italy between 1962 and 1974, was as controversial a figure in his day as Totti is now. But he was speaking of a different era when he said: "In my day players cried when they were left out of the national squad, it was that important and the passion for the *Azzurri* was so intense. Now that same shirt has been reduced to a piece of merchandise and all players can think about is squabbling over the price."

Italy's erratic progress in the Euro 2008 qualifying campaign – they are second in Group B, two points behind France after five wins, one draw and one defeat – might be ascribed partly to the Totti distraction. His indecision was unfair on Roberto Donadoni (the successor to World Cup-winning coach Marcello Lippi), who is inexperienced at club level let alone in the international arena. His rebuilding work had always lacked credibility because he did not know whether he would need, at some stage, to factor Totti back into the equation. Not that Totti's international record is wonderful. He scored only nine goals in 58 appearances and made a very poor contribution to Italy's campaigns at the 2002 World Cup and Euro 2004. He was sent off in the second round defeat by co-hosts South Korea in the former event, and was banned from the Portugal tournament, thus pushing Italy towards a first-stage exit, after spitting at Denmark's Christian Poulsen in the opening group game.

The growing trend of players to turn their back on their national team is a contentious area. Roberto Ayala, Argentina's veteran defender, has followed Totti's example. But was his decision a bitter reaction to his unfortunate own goal in the Copa America Final defeat by Brazil? Ayala says not. Maybe.

Obligation

France coach Raymond Domenech believes FIFA should bar any active, registered player from saying no. Domenech originally made the suggestion after veteran midfielder Claude Makelele tried to quit *Les Bleus* midway through the last World Cup qualifying campaign. He says: "Footballers at the top level are paid huge sums of money and it's their professional duty and responsibility to play when they are picked – as long as they are fit, of course – and their social and moral obligation to represent their nation. It's a duty, like a soldier."

Not that stepping down is a new phenomenon. West Germany's great inside-left Fritz Walter did just that after captaining the team to their shock 1954 World Cup Final victory over the great Hungary. Walter told national coach Sepp Herberger that, at 36, he wanted to concentrate on winding down his career at club level. Yet his Kaiserslautern side played only in the part-time German regional league and never had to cope with European competition.

Two years later, as West Germany prepared for their World Cup defence in Sweden, Herberger persuaded Walter it was in the national interest for him to come out of retirement. Sadly, at 38, he was past his best and injury had caught up with him.

No fewer than four of West Germany's squad quit after the 2-1 World Cup Final victory over Holland in 1974. One of them was record marksman Gerd Muller, who had scored 68 goals in his 62 internationals. He

was still only 28 and far from past his peak. Indeed, he played arguably some of his finest football in the next two years as Bayern Munich, who had won the European Cup for the first time in 1974, completed a hat-trick of triumphs in the competition.

Expectations

Muller, now a youth coach at Bayern, says: "The expectation was intense both at club and national team level. I felt it was not fair on my family to be away so much of the time. I cannot imagine how players cope with it today. I suppose the consolation is they are paid much more than we were.

"A top player today – maybe a Klose or a Kahn – can see that in 10 or 15 years of concentrated football they can earn enough to set up themselves and their families for life. But maybe that's why the football isn't so entertaining. In my day we played first for enjoyment then for a living. We never thought it was meant to keep us secure for the next 40 years. The mentality has changed.

"Players stop playing for their countries now because they want to concentrate on extending their big-money careers with their clubs. Sometimes I wonder what will happen to national team football. The World Cup will go on but I think they'll have to cut back on the qualifying campaigns. That's a big problem."

Alan Shearer and Paul Scholes are England players who retired from the national team in recent years to concentrate on their club careers. Jamie Carragher of Liverpool is also considering that step but, in his case, the reason is anger at being overlooked by manager Steve McClaren for the June Euro 2008 tie against Estonia: not the best of reasons. But perhaps the attitude of both Carragher and Totti underlines the change of attitude of players towards national team football. More pragmatic, more precious.

Sandro Mazzola, Rivera's outstanding contemporary from neighbours Internazionale, agreed with his old club rival and national team-mate. Mazzola said: "It's sad. I don't understand how a player can make a choice like that. I retired from football altogether when I was 32 – which was quite young – out of disappointment because I had lost my place in the national team. That is how it should be, not the other way round."

> **They stop playing for their countries now to extend big-money club careers**
>
> *Gerd Muller, Germany's record scorer*

Angry...Carragher

Quite a turn-up...Australia crowd the Iraq goal during their shock Asian Cup defeat

Socceroos find their match

AUSTRALIA quit Oceania for Asia because they wanted a sharper competitive challenge (of course, greater financial/TV potential may also have been a factor). They had grown weary of (usually easily) winning the Oceania World Cup qualifying section only to lose to some unpredictable South American country in the play-off for a finals berth. But now the Socceroos know the scale of the task they have set themselves.

The evidence of the recent Asian Cup is that complacency within the ranks is the first hurdle to be overcome. The Australians had expected to go further than the quarter-finals, when they lost to holders Japan in a shoot-out.

"It's been a good experience," said coach Graham Arnold, though it is one that he is unlikely to undergo again. The fact that Australia, the pre-finals favourites, very nearly crashed out at the group stage was enough to seal his fate. They drew 1-1 with Oman in their opener and then slumped 3-1 to an under-rated Iraq. Only a 4-0 win over Thailand edged them forward.

Australia will now scour the world for a coach who can bring experience, wisdom and a record of attainment to the job. Ideally, of course, they would like Guus Hiddink back just as soon as he has finished his current stint with Russia. Chances are, they will be outbid.

A word on the sponsors

AT LAST, an international coalition of media organisations has launched a campaign to fight back against sports organisers' accelerating encroachment on freedom of the press.

Around 30 organisations representing publishers, news agencies and journalists are upset by federations' attempts to put a price on all sorts of fact and action that belong properly in the public domain and sell them to sponsors.

Ever wondered why newspapers and magazines name the sponsors of competitions and stadiums? Mostly, it is because editors have never computed the value of such free advertising.

Expect this to change. Broadcasters, even the free BBC, are bound by contract to include sponsors' names. Newspapers and magazines are not. ●

Status quo rules

The interesting changes in FIFA's rulebook are in the "additional instructions" section

Illustration by Dave Semple

I'VE BEEN SCANNING the new FIFA *Rules of the Game*, looking for those vertical lines that indicate something new or something modified from last year's version. I didn't have to spend much time at it because only three amendments have been made, and none of them could be considered exactly earth-shattering. In fact, only one of the amendments involves a change in the rules themselves – the other two come in the section known as "decisions of the International Board".

More to the point, none of them has anything to do with the way the game is played – by which I mean the way the ball is controlled and manoeuvred around the pitch. Rather, they deal with matters that you might not expect to find in a sports rulebook. For example, fashion – if you're going to wear an undershirt or undershorts, make sure that any part of them that shows is the same colour as the outer garments; politics – no political (or advertising or personal) messages on your undershirts, please; and advertising – that's not allowed on the grass in the technical area or the goal, nor are boards permitted within one metre of the touchline.

Pretty tame stuff. But there has been a quite extensive reorganisation of the "additional instructions" section, which has grown from 23 pages to 71, and is now nearly 20 pages longer than the rules themselves. It incorporates much material that was formerly included in the less formal "questions and answers" addendum.

It's in additional instructions that you find the interesting stuff, such as this: "The use of radio communications systems between players and/or technical staff is not permitted." Excellent. That's been a blight that has been hovering over the sport for six years now; it was first mooted by Brazilian coach Vanderlei Luxemburgo when he was in charge of Corinthians, in 2001. "It's a technological advance," he said. "It's for all of football's benefit." Maybe, but plenty of us saw it was a step towards robot players and wanted FIFA to ban it. Nothing happened. Early in 2004 FIFA said that the matter would "likely" be discussed by the International Board at its annual meeting. Again, no action. So it's taken six years to ban something that should have been quashed as soon as it appeared.

In the interests of fair play, I suppose, the additional instructions now state that jewellery is forbidden not only for players but also for referees (except for his watch or timing device).

A look at page 60 makes it comparatively easy to assure oneself that goalkeepers regularly get away with illegally marking the field. There is also, on page 118, a clear reminder of what is surely the most ignored rule in the book: the mandatory yellow card for a player who shows any sort of dissent towards a referee's decision.

Less satisfactory is the attempt to define persistent infringement: "There is no specific number of infringements which constitutes 'persistence' " – it's left to the referee to make a judgement.

The taking of penalties still puzzles me because I am convinced that, once upon a time, it was ruled the kicker's run-up had to be uninterrupted, no pauses or fakes. Now "feinting to take a penalty-kick to confuse opponents is permitted". That's clear enough, but I wonder about what follows: "However, if in the opinion of the referee the feinting is considered an act of unsporting behaviour, the player shall be cautioned."

A particularly interesting aspect of the additional instructions is that it reflects the growing importance of the assistant referee. A totally new section of 18 pages is now given over to defining his duties and responsibilities, positioning, signalling, and so on.

Assistant's role

As it happens, I wanted to check on the assistant's role during penalty shoot-outs. I had just watched Brazil goalkeeper Doni flagrantly cheat in the Copa America semi-finals by coming several yards off his line to save a Uruguayan penalty. He got away with it, and it beggared belief that the assistant, standing a mere six yards off to the right, where the goal line and goal area intersect, had not seen the infringement.

But according to the additional instructions, he's not there to spot movement: "His main duty is to check if the ball crosses the line" – leaving the referee to spot movement, though I don't feel that either he or the assistant is in the proper position to do that. Surely it would make more sense for someone – the fourth official maybe – to be positioned behind the kicker, so that he can see both kicker and goalkeeper without having to swivel his eyes?

The current system obviously does not work. Doni virtually ran forward – an Argentinian report joked that he had flung himself at the kicker's feet! Doni himself later admitted the infringement.

The rulemakers don't exactly help their cause. On the facing page, slap-bang opposite where it says the assistant's main duty in a shoot-out is to check if the ball crosses the line, there are the instructions for the assistant at a penalty-kick during regulation time. Similar situation, similar position, on the goal line (this time further out, where it meets the penalty area) – but totally different instructions: "If the goalkeeper blatantly moves forward before the ball is kicked and a goal is not scored, the assistant referee shall raise his flag."

And, let us hope, the referee will order a retake, though I'm struggling to remember the last time I saw that happen. ●

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Thaksin stole my club

The takeover of Manchester City is a shocking state of affairs

THERE WAS NO natural reason for me to become a Manchester City fan at the age of six. Support for the club did not run in the family, and no other kindly grown-up took me to Maine Road to be indoctrinated. But this was Manchester in the early 1970s, football was in the very air we kids breathed, and we had to belong to one or other of the great clubs, which were both then ageing out of their trophy-laden years. It was, my memory tells me, City's seductive badge, a ship and a rose, opposite United's nasty red devil, that made me choose the Blues.

Such is the power of football fandom. The first games I was taken to turned out to be at Old Trafford, to watch United, in the last days of George Best, in 50,000 crowds, but City, resolutely, were already my club. I could give you a *Fever Pitch*-style sketch of my supporting life, the early years awed by a team of internationals, Malcolm Allison's barmy return in 1979, then relegation in 1983, which taught fans of my generation the crushing lesson that life can really let you down. Then years of making the best of it, singing in the rain, appreciating the team that came through, Andy Hinchcliffe, Paul Lake, David White and the others, all good lads, who beat United 5-1 in 1989 and gave us hope. That hope was dashed, for them and for us, but such was life on Blue Moon.

Nick Hornby, though, did all that better than I ever could in his novel about supporting Arsenal – suffice to say that for me, as for many fans, my club grew in adulthood into a constant, a link with home, and with an innocent, child-like love of football, through the changes and challenges of real life.

Now, my club is trying to sell me a fable. Football, they say, is all about success, and for that a club needs money, to buy players and pay them fortunes, to compete with the other clubs doing the same. Premier League clubs are rolling about in another orgy of spending, this time in anticipation of the £2.7billion TV money that's about to pour in, and Manchester City must not be left behind.

Illustration by Dave Sample

"Benefactor" found

So, the fans must count themselves lucky that after years of searching, they have found a benefactor to put money in, usher us back into the "regular European competition" we watched when we were children. This man has come from a country far away and chosen City, because he loves football.

Now he has appointed Sven Goran Eriksson as City's manager, about which, the club says, the fans are very happy, and they are flocking back to buy season tickets, when before they were staying away.

I wish I was happy, too, about Thaksin Shinawatra taking over. But I am not. I still find it shocking. In advance, City seem to have been prepared to defend the man's alleged human rights violations. During his time as prime minister of Thailand, around 3,000 people, labelled drug dealers, were killed without, Amnesty International claimed, due process of law or subsequent investigation by the government. City were ready to say Thaksin was a popular and democratically elected prime minister who was deposed in a military coup (the latter point is certainly true).

They seem not to have been quite as up to speed with the Thai authorities' investigation into corruption allegations against Thaksin, but then City decided they did not matter either because the investigation is proceeding under the new military government, which has no validity. The matter, when you enquire into it, is rather more nuanced – protests about the sale of the corporation that made Thaksin's family their tax-free billions brought Bangkok to a standstill, and there were allegations for years that Thaksin was improperly feathering his nest, which he denies.

On the same day that City's chairman, John Wardle, announced the Thai was buying the club – and repaying Wardle his loans – Thaksin was charged in Thailand with criminal corruption relating to the sale of a piece of land to his wife when he was prime minister. City say this is not an issue, that Thaksin is "fit and proper" to own the club, and that there is no conflict with City's "brand" as the "true" Manchester club, with its award-winning, child-friendly, community work.

As an adult, though, I want more than this from my club. If football clubs make their claims to lifelong loyalty, they have to embody something worth belonging to. This club is not, in reality, the magical sky-blue vision of my six-year-old imagination. Manchester City is a company that belongs to Thaksin Shinawatra and his family. And so, I feel, it is not my club any more. ●

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Support act...AIK fans get behind their team

Passion play

The Swedish capital is home to three popular clubs. By Peterjon Cresswell

STOCKHOLM HAS staged a World Cup Final, is the regular venue for Swedish national team home games and occasionally stages European club finals, yet it is not a traditional football hub. Ice-hockey, or the local outdoor version, bandy, was always the bigger sport here, and it is only in the past decade that the city has flexed its muscles when it comes to winning the football league title.

After the war, Norrkoping and then Gothenburg were the power bases for the domestic game, with Stockholm clubs nipping in only occasionally to take the championship. But the decline of IFK Gothenburg has allowed Stockholm's big three – AIK, Djurgardens and Hammarby – to claim five titles between them in the past nine years.

The most surprising and, for football romantics, the most heartening was Hammarby's triumph in 2001, after a century of failure.

Yet there is passion for football in the Swedish capital, stoked by the rivalry between the city's main sides. These days, the three top the national attendance charts, with healthy home averages of between 15,000 and 20,000. Indeed, demand for tickets for derby games is such that they are now invariably held at Stockholm's 35,000-capacity Rasunda national

> **The Rasunda national stadium is also the home ground of AIK, who have the biggest fan base of Stockholm's three main clubs**

stadium, which is also the home ground of AIK, the club with the biggest fan base.

AIK have their roots in the northern suburb of Solna, where the Rasunda stands, having relocated there in 1937. The club were founded as an all-sports organisation in the 1890s and enjoy royal patronage – a crown sits above their badge.

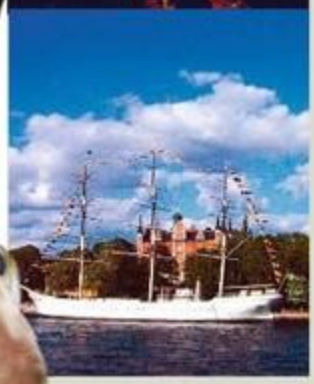
They were an amateur side for most of the 20th century and then came to prominence in the 1980s for the wrong reasons – when their Black Army fans were involved in a series of hooligan incidents. However, AIK developed a more professional approach in the 1990s with future UEFA president Lennart Johansson at the helm, picking up a couple of domestic trophies and making an appearance in the Champions League along the way. Johansson is still their honorary chairman.

AIK's arch-rivals, Djurgardens, are based at the quaint old Stockholms stadium, built for the 1912 Olympics. Their fans

Tight-knit...Hammarby's Paulinho is hassled by AIK's Niklas Sandberg during an early-season derby

SURVIVAL GUIDE

Island life



● ARRIVAL & TRANSPORT

Stockholm's main international airport is Arlanda (+46 8 797 6100; www.lfv.se), 50km north of the city centre. A regular express train (top picture) runs to Central Station. Flygbussarna buses run to the central bus station.

Tunnelbana (T-bana) metro and buses cover the city. For details of routes and tickets, see www.sl.se.

● HOTELS

The main tourist office (Sweden House, Hamngatan 27; +46 8 5082 8508; www.stockholmtown.se) has a hotel-booking centre at Central Station (Hotellcentralen; +46 8 789 2456; same website).

Upmarket hotels include the Berns (Nackstromsgatan 8, Norrmalm; +46 8 566 32200; www.berns.se; 3,000 kronor/£220), popular with celebrities. The bright, mid-range Ersta (Erstagatan 1K; +46 8 714 6100; www.ersta.se; 1,200kr/£90) offers wonderful views.

Floating hotels include the LogInn (Kajplats 16, Sodermalarstrand; +46 8 442 4420; www.loginn.se; 1,000kr/£75) and the Af Chapman (bottom picture) (Flaggmansvagen 8; +46 8 463 2266; www.stfchapman.com; 400kr/£30), a hostel with bunk beds.

● EATING & DRINKING

Famously expensive Stockholm offers a range of venues with sporting themes. They include the Cafe dello Sport (Palsundsgatan 8; +46 8 668 7488) and Undici (Sturegatan 22; +46 8 661 6617; www.undici.se), owned by former Swedish international Tomas Brolin. More traditional football-friendly hostelries include O'Leary's (Gotgatan 11; +46 8 644 6901; www.olearys.se). All these venues serve food.

● DAYTIME ENTERTAINMENT

The island of Gamla Stan (pictured second top) is sightseeing central, with attractions such as the former royal palace of Kungliga Slottet (+46 8 402 6130; www.royalcourt.se); the Nobel Museum (middle picture) (Stortorget; +46 8 534 81818; www.nobel.se), which explores the work of Nobel prize winners; and Storkyrkan, the Great Church (Trangsund 1; +46 8 723 3010; www.sthdomkyrko.com). The Vasa Museum (Galarvarvsvagen 14; +46 8 519 54800; www.vasamuseet.se) houses the huge Vasa ship of the 1620s.

● AFTER DARK

The glitzier downtown clubs include Fasching (Kungsgatan 63; www.fasching.se) and the pricey Sturecompagniet (Sturegatan 4; www.sturecompagniet.se). Debaser (pictured second bottom) (Karl Johans Torg 1; +46 8 462 9860; www.debaser.se) is typical of the grittier venues in the Sodermalm district.

are drawn mainly from the city's eastern districts. The Blue Saints have had much the better of things than AIK in recent years, with three league titles since 2002. They also came off best in the first league meeting of the sides this season, in May. Two goals in two minutes by Finnish international Daniel Sjolund helped secure a 3-1 win.

Although the two clubs are once again trailing in the wake of defending champions Elfsborg this season, their century-old derby is the season's classic fixture. AIK and Djurgardens clash again on September 24.

People's team

Hammarby are the people's team. They are based in the working-class southern neighbourhood of Sodermalm, though this is rapidly becoming gentrified. Hammarby are known as "Bajen", a corruption of the word for village.

The humble club were in such financial straits in 1950 that they had to sell star player Nacka Skoglund to AIK. But Skoglund, who went on to make a name for himself in Serie A, returned to his spiritual home in 1964.

Hammarby will be seeking revenge for their 1-0 loss to AIK in April when the teams meet again on September 3. By then they may have done the double over Djurgardens. Hammarby won 2-0 in June, with the second meeting on August 13.

The big three were joined in the top flight this season by Brommapojkarna from the western Stockholm district of Bromma. However, they face a tough challenge to stay up, lying third bottom just after the halfway point of the season. ●

Leap...Hammarby's Zengin hurdles Djurgardens Concha

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THE STADIUMS

The Rasunda

The Stockholms

National pride

The Rasunda (Solnavagen 51; +46 8 735 0935) is Sweden's national stadium and the venue for nearly all Stockholm derbies. Built in 1937, it staged the 1958 World Cup Final and now has a capacity of about 35,000. It's set in Solna, near T-bana stop Solna Centrum on the blue line.

Rasunda is the home ground of AIK, whose Black Army fans occupy the north terrace, Norra Sta, blocks 210-215. Blocks 430-435 are behind the south goal. The best seats are in Ostra Laktaren, blocks 101-107, accessed from Solnavagen.

Djurgardens play most of their home matches at the Stockholms stadium (Lidingovagen 1, Hjorthagen; +46 8 5082 8362). The arena is often referred to simply as "Stadion", which is also the name of its T-bana stop on the red line. The capacity is only 14,000. Home fans occupy blocks M-N and L, by Valhallavagen, on the side opposite the famous clock tower.

Hammarby's home is the Soderstadion beside the Globe Arena, by the Globen stop on the T-bana green line. Home fans congregate in blocks J and K in the north section.

Tickets for all club and international matches in Stockholm can be found on www.ticnet.se.

The Soderstadion

WORLD SERVICE

THE ULTIMATE GLOBAL NEWS AND RESULTS DIGEST

Ball-watching...Argentina's Pablo Piatti and Lukas Kuban of the Czech Republic during the Under-20 World Cup Final

Brazilian love-in...Vagner Love congratulates Daniel Alves after setting him up for the third goal in the Final against Argentina

The road to Maracaibo

Brian Homewood reviews the Copa America, stage by stage

GROUP A

Hosts push through

Hosts Venezuela progressed beyond the first round for the first time, having rather conveniently been drawn in the easiest group alongside Peru, Bolivia and Uruguay.

The Venezuelans had, in fact, only ever won a single Copa America game, against Bolivia on their debut appearance in 1967, and their opening match this time pitted them against the same opponents in San Cristobal. Another win appeared on the cards when Giancarlo Maldonado put Venezuela ahead with an angled shot from Ricardo Paez's pass in the 20th minute. But Bolivia, who themselves had not won a game at the competition since 1997, are a different proposition under coach Erwin Sanchez and equalised seven minutes before half-time when Alejandro Cichero turned Jaime Moreno's shot into his own goal. Paez, son of Venezuela coach Richard Paez, put the hosts back in front 10 minutes into the second half but Bolivia snatched a deserved point when Juan Carlos Arce equalised six minutes from time.

Venezuela's next match was against Peru, who had produced an early shock by beating Uruguay 3-0 with goals from Miguel Villalta, Juan Carlos Marino and Paolo Guerrero.

The Venezuela game produced the tournament's first red card – Peru's Pedro Garcia was harshly dismissed for elbowing in the 14th minute – and its first major refereeing controversy when the Peruvians had what looked a clear penalty turned down, for a trip on Claudio Pizarro.

By that time, Cichero had headed Venezuela in front and, after Peru missed several good chances, including Guerrero hitting a post, the hosts sealed their win with a superb run and shot by Daniel Arismendi in the 79th minute. The game ended in turmoil as Cichero provoked the Peruvians by nonchalantly playing keepy-uppy, which earned him a yellow card for ungentlemanly conduct.

Meanwhile, Uruguay recovered from their defeat to beat Bolivia 1-0, a second-half goal from Vicente Sanchez giving them a somewhat fortuitous win. Venezuela then qualified before they played their third game, against Uruguay, when Argentina's 4-2 win over Colombia in Group C guaranteed they would take one of the quarter-final berths reserved for the two best third-placed teams. With Uruguay needing a point, the two teams appeared more than happy to play out a goalless draw.

That was in stark contrast to the other game, with Peru needing a draw and Bolivia a win. Bolivia twice led, Moreno lobbing them in front in the 24th minute and Jhasmany Campos firing in a superb second on the stroke of half-time. But Pizarro stepped forward to save Peru with two headed goals, both from Marino free-kicks on the right, the second with only six minutes left, to force a draw.

GROUP B

Brazil find favour

Brazil lost their opening match 2-0 to Mexico then twice benefited from dubious refereeing decisions as they qualified in second place behind Hugo Sanchez's team.

Mexico went into the first game three days after losing to the United States in the CONCACAF Gold Cup Final. However, with several so-called *Lavolpistas* (players faithful to Sanchez's predecessor and bitter rival, Ricardo Lavolpe) missing, they were a different outfit.

The Mexicans took the lead against Brazil in the 23rd minute with a sublime effort from Nery Castillo, who, latching on to Juan Carlos Cacho's chipped pass into the area, flicked the ball over a defender and then past goalkeeper Doni without letting it touch the ground.

Brazil were still in shock when Ramon Morales scored five minutes later with a 30-metre free-kick that left Doni rooted to the spot.

Brazil replaced Diego with Anderson at half-time and proceeded to create a flurry of chances, only to be denied by outstanding goalkeeping from Guillermo Ochoa.

In the other game, Ecuador twice led Chile with goals by Luis Antonio Valencia and Christian Benitez but Humberto Suazo equalised each time. Carlos Villanueva then hit an 86th-minute winner for the Chileans from a free-kick.

Chile had the edge over Brazil in the second round of games, played at the unfinished Monumental stadium in Maturin, and Dunga's men looked unlikely to break through until they were awarded the softest of penalties for an alleged push in the area in the 36th minute. Robinho converted, although Claudio Bravo nearly got to the ball.

Chile dominated the second half and Suazo should have equalised when he was sent clear, but he dallied and allowed the defence to recover. Robinho then grabbed two more goals in the last 10 minutes for his hat-trick to give the score a flattering look. Chile coach Nelson Acosta was unimpressed, saying: "He scored at the end of the match when our defence was completely opened. It's very easy to score when your opponents are tired and chasing the game."

Mexico then guaranteed their quarter-final place with a 2-1 win over Ecuador. Once again, Castillo opened the scoring, after 21 minutes, and Cuauhtemoc Blanco set up fellow substitute Omar Bravo for the second in the 79th minute. Edison Mendez scored Ecuador's consolation five minutes later. That, combined with results in the other groups, left Chile needing to draw with Mexico to ensure they made the quarter-finals as one of the two best third-placed sides (presuming Brazil beat Ecuador). A draw would also guarantee Mexico top spot in the group. Needless to say, an insipid 0-0 ensued.

"I don't know if they really wanted to win," said Mexico coach Sanchez. "It's difficult to attack against a team like Chile who are looking after their interests." An equally unapologetic Acosta said: "We qualified and that is what is important. Football depends a lot upon the moment."

Net gain...Robinho converts a controversial penalty for Brazil to see off Ecuador

Brazil, who also needed a draw, beat Ecuador 1-0 thanks to another controversial penalty, awarded for a supposed foul on Robinho when no contact appeared to be made. The Real Madrid youngster converted for his fourth goal of the tournament.

Ecuador, who reached the second round at last year's World Cup, went home without a point but without ever having played badly. It was the fourth Copa in a row that they had fallen at the first hurdle. "We have a good team but we didn't get the results," said coach Luis Fernando Suarez. "We seem to have created the idea in our conscience that things aren't going to turn out well in the Copa America."

Home fires...Daniel Arismendi seals Venezuela's Group A win over Peru

GROUP C

Win-win situation

Argentina and Paraguay both qualified for the last eight with a game to spare after winning their first two matches, while the United States, having brought a second-string squad, went home pointless and left most observers wondering why they had accepted the invitation to take part in the first place.

Colombia also went home early, and their fate was effectively decided during a five-minute period in their opener against Paraguay.

The Colombians, having had the better of the opening exchanges, squandered a chance to take the lead when Alvaro Dominguez's 27th-minute penalty was saved by Justo Villar, then saw Roque Santa Cruz put Paraguay ahead with a breakaway goal three minutes later. Santa Cruz added another with an almost replica effort at the start of the second half, and although Colombia pressed forward, they collapsed in the final 10 minutes as Santa Cruz completed his hat-trick and substitute Salvador Cabanas notched a quick brace.

All out to stop him...Colombia's Ivan Cordoba puts in a desperate challenge to thwart Paraguay's hat-trick hero Roque Santa Cruz

Cabanas was on target again in the following game, a 3-1 win over the USA, also as a substitute. Edgar Barreto had given Paraguay the lead in the 29th minute, stabbing home Jonathan Santana's incisive pass. Ricardo Clark equalised six minutes later, but Paraguay regained the lead 10 minutes into the second half when Oscar Cardozo pounced on a poor back-pass to score. Cabanas struck in the final minute.

The US had begun the tournament well, taking a shock lead against Argentina as Eddie Johnson converted a ninth-minute penalty. However, Hernan Crespo, making his Copa America debut at the age of 31, levelled two minutes later and after that it was a question of how long it would take for Argentina to break down the packed US defence.

The goal finally came on the hour, as Crespo ran on to Lionel Messi's incisive pass to place the ball wide of Kasey Keller. In the last 15 minutes, substitute Pablo Aimar headed a third from Gabriel Heinze's cross, and another substitute, Carlos Tevez, added a fourth.

Curiously, Argentina again fell behind in their next match, against Colombia, as Edixon Perea scored with a cheeky back-heel after 10 minutes. But Alfio Basile's team were gifted an equaliser 10 minutes later when they were awarded a penalty for a perceived foul on Messi after what appeared to be a 50-50 challenge. Crespo fired home but, in doing so, he pulled a muscle that kept him out of the rest of the tournament.

Two goals from Juan Roman Riquelme – a nonchalant header and a free-kick – put Argentina 3-1 up at half-time. Colombia refused to lie down, substitute Jaime Castrillon pulling one goal back with a header and coming close to forcing an equaliser. But Diego Milito, who had replaced Crespo, made it 4-2 in injury-time.

That left Argentina needing to beat Paraguay to take first place, which they did thanks to Javier Mascherano's first goal for his country. It was a superb effort, a cleverly-placed shot from the edge of the penalty area that curled into the bottom left corner of the goal.

Castrillon gave Colombia a consolation 1-0 win over the US in the other game. Team-mate Hugo Rodallega missed a penalty and ended up in goal as Robinson Zapata was sent off after twice being booked for time-wasting.

QUARTER-FINALS

All too easy

The quarter-finals produced an astonishing sequence of one-sided matches as Mexico and Brazil hit six goals apiece while Argentina and Uruguay managed four each.

Mexico's stunning and totally unexpected demolition of Paraguay began after only three minutes when Nery Castillo intercepted Julio Cesar Caceres' back-pass and was upended by keeper Aldo Bobadilla as he raced into the area. Bobadilla, standing in for the injured Justo Villar, was sent off and replaced by Joel Zayas, whose first job on his debut was to pick Castillo's penalty out of the net.

A Gerardo Torrado goal and another from Castillo made it 3-0 at half-time; Fernando Arce, Cuauhtemoc Blanco (from a penalty) and Omar Bravo added another three in the second half, with Paraguay unable to reply.

Chile went into their clash with Brazil amid reports of players going on a drinking spree and causing damage at the team hotel in Puerto Ordaz. They certainly had little stomach for the fight once Juan had scored with an easy header in the 16th minute.

Julio Baptista added a second, Robinho scored either side of half-time, Josue notched his first international goal midway through the second period and Vagner Love completed the rout late on. Chile's loan goal was an exquisite lob from Humberto Suazo 15 minutes from full-time.

Peru, whose coach Julio Cesar Uribe resigned shortly after the finals, held Argentina until half-time. But at the break the Argentinians made a change that turned the match – replacing Diego Milito with Carlos Tevez in attack. Less than a minute after the re-start, Juan Roman Riquelme exchanged passes with Tevez and scored with a beautifully struck drive from the edge of the area.

Riquelme produced another masterpiece in the 61st minute with a slide-rule pass to Lionel Messi, who slipped the ball between Leao Butron's

Demolition job...Nery Castillo scores for Mexico in their quarter-final rout of Paraguay

legs for the second. Javier Mascherano added the third and Riquelme finished off a sweeping break for the fourth.

Pablo Garcia was Uruguay's hero against Venezuela, scoring a superb effort in the 65th minute to put his team 2-1 ahead. Diego Forlan and Cristian Rodriguez added two more in the last five minutes to give Uruguay a flattering 4-1 win. Forlan had put Uruguay ahead in the 38th minute, with Juan Arango equalising from a free-kick three minutes later.

SEMI-FINALS

Messi undoes Mexico, Doni saves the day

Lionel Messi scored the goal of the tournament as Argentina beat Mexico 3-0, while, for the third time in the championship, Brazil benefited from dubious refereeing as they beat Uruguay on penalties following a 2-2 draw.

Maicon and Julio Baptista twice gave Brazil the lead but Uruguay hit back through Diego Forlan and Sebastian Abreu in sweltering Maracaibo, where a floodlight failure halted the first half for 14 minutes.

Both teams missed one of the first five penalties, and Uruguay looked set for victory when Fernando missed with Brazil's first effort in sudden death. But Pablo Garcia crashed Uruguay's shot against a post, Gilberto converted for Brazil and Diego Lugano's effort was saved by Doni.

Doni was clearly three to four metres off his line when he made the save and he had also been permitted to approach and provoke every Uruguayan penalty-taker without any interference from Colombian referee Oscar Ruiz.

No way back...Argentina keeper Roberto Abbondanzieri is a beaten man as Daniel Alves puts Brazil 3-0 ahead in the Final

"There are certain things that happen – for example, they built two new dressing rooms at the stadium and both were given to Brazil. They sent us to the old one," said Uruguay coach Oscar Tabarez.

Mexico edged the first half against Argentina in Puerto Ordaz and Andres Guardado hit a post, but Argentina went ahead just before half-time when Gabriel Heinze hooked in a Juan Roman Riquelme free-kick.

Mexico's Nery Castillo hit the crossbar before Messi scored the second with a stunning chip over keeper Oswaldo Sanchez from the edge of the area. Five minutes later, Riquelme converted a penalty for the third.

Class act...Messi after his wondergoal

FINAL

Artistry crushed by efficiency

Although Argentina went into the Final in Maracaibo as clear favourites, there was always a sneaking suspicion that they could be undone by Brazil's superior physical strength, bad luck, their own nerves or a combination of all three.

Less than four minutes into the game, their worst fears – and those of all the purists hoping for an Argentina win – were realised when Elano found Julio Baptista with a 40-metre crossfield pass. "The Beast" controlled the ball and, as Argentina captain Roberto Ayala backed off, unleashed a fulminating drive into the top right-hand corner past stranded keeper Roberto Abbondanzieri.

It was a mortal blow for Argentina, already carrying the burden of 14 years without a title and with two recent thrashings by Brazil – 4-1 at the Confederations Cup Final in 2005 and 3-0 in last September's friendly at Arsenal's new stadium in London – still fresh in their minds.

If anyone needed confirmation that it was to be Brazil's afternoon, it came in the next 20 minutes as Juan Roman Riquelme crashed a left-foot volley against the outside of a post and had another effort turned away by keeper Doni.

However, Argentina were looking shaky at the back as Abbondanzieri fumbled Maicon's long-range shot and Gabriel Heinze nearly turned the ball into his own net.

Shortly after that escape, Daniel Alves burst down the right and produced a vicious inswinging cross that Ayala, making his 115th and final international appearance, inadvertently slid into his own goal.

Daniel Alves had only just come on for the injured Elano in midfield in what proved an inspired substitution by Dunga. Although nominally a right-back, his speed down the right wing caused all sorts of misery for Heinze on the left and the Argentinian defence looked nervous throughout.

There was clearly no way back for Argentina after that, a record 15th Copa America title out of their reach. Brazil, with their superior physical power, won nearly all the 50-50 balls and repeatedly interrupted Argentina's best moves with systematic fouls in midfield – Dunga's team gave away a total of 37 free-kicks.

Riquelme contributed to the success of Brazil's tactics by insisting on lofting the free-kicks into the heart of the area where they were comfortably dealt with by Brazil's gigantic central defenders.

Although the Brazilians sat back and soaked up the pressure, a third goal on the counter-attack seemed inevitable and it followed in the 69th minute. Robinho sent Vagner Love scuttling away down the left, he laid the ball into the path of Daniel Alves, who scored with a low shot into the far corner.

It was a ruthlessly efficient performance from the five-time world champions and an utterly depressing afternoon for anyone who enjoys the finer arts of the game. ●

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HOLLAND

Revival at Feyenoord

LIFE IS A rollercoaster if you're a Feyenoord fan. Two months ago the Rotterdam club were down and out, having finished only seventh in the League and failed to qualify for Europe. Coach Erwin Koeman resigned, saying that he saw no hope of improving the club's position.

But Feyenoord have since been transformed, with an injection of new money and the arrival of a new coach and a number of Dutch internationals. Suddenly, expectations are high, which was underlined by the fact that 13,000 fans turned up at the first training session.

The wind of change started when chairman Jorien Van den Herik stepped down, and his departure meant several entrepreneurs were now willing to invest in Feyenoord.

Meanwhile, director Peter Bosz persuaded Bert Van Marwijk, who led the club to win the UEFA Cup in 2002, to return as coach. And suddenly director, coach and players were making phone calls across Europe to persuade potential signings to join. Tim De Cler (AZ), Giovanni Van Bronckhorst (Barcelona), Roy Makaay (Bayern Munich) and Kevin Hofland (Wolfsburg) will play in Rotterdam this season.

There have also been notable arrivals at champions PSV Eindhoven, with Danko Lazovic (Vitesse), Tommie Van der Leegte (Wolfsburg), Kenneth Perez (Ajax) and Mike Zonneveld (NAC Breda) all signing. Serb defender Slobodan Rajkovic has arrived on loan from Chelsea to replace Brazilian Alex, expected to go back the other way. On the way out are Patrick Kluivert and Michael Reiziger.

As well as Perez, Ajax, last term's runners-up, have also lost Ryan Babel to Liverpool, Zdenek Grygera (Juventus) and Tom De Mul (Sevilla), with Kennedy Bakircioglu (Twente) and Laurent Delorge (Den Haag) coming in.

AZ, who finished third, signed Brazilian striker Ari from Kalmar of Sweden, but their most experienced player, Georgian forward Shota Arveladze, has joined Levante in Spain.

Holland's European Under-21 Championship-winning side have proved hot property, with Daniel De Ridder joining Birmingham from Celta Vigo and Maceo Rigters leaving NAC for Blackburn.

Utrecht have appointed Willem Van Hanegem as coach to replace Foeke Booy, now at Saudi club Al Nassr. Van Hanegem's last coaching post was as assistant to national boss Dick Advocaat during Euro 2004.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

New faces...Roy Makaay (left) and Kevin Hofland pose for photographers after joining the Feyenoord revolution this summer

PORTUGAL

Porto try to fill the gaps

Champions FC Porto suffered two major losses early on in the summer when Anderson joined Manchester United and Pepe left for Real Madrid. As August approached, the Dragons were trying to hold on to two other stars, Lucho Gonzalez and Ricardo Quaresma, who had been linked with Valencia and Atletico Madrid respectively. Coach Jesualdo Ferreira spent some of his transfer kitty on Argentinians Marco Bolatti and Ernesto Farias, with Mariano Gonzalez also joining, on loan from Palermo.

Sporting Lisbon signed two Serbian internationals – Simon Vukcevic and Vladimir Purovic – while coach Paulo Bento also secured Marat Izmailov on loan to fill the gap left by Nani's departure to Manchester United. The Lions were also looking for a new goalkeeper after Portuguese international Ricardo joined Real Betis.

Benfica signed Paraguayan striker Oscar Cardozo, Ivorian defender Marc Zoro and German keeper Hans-Jorg Butt. Chinese Under-21 international Yu Dabao has been promoted from Benfica's B team and will become the first player from his country to play in the Portuguese League. Italian striker Fabrizio Miccoli has left for Palermo.

Pedro Pinto

AUSTRIA

Early start for co-hosts

The League kicked off earlier than ever, on July 10, as part of the FA's plan to give the national team more preparation time in the run-up to the Euro 2008 finals, which Austria are co-hosting. The other significant change is that the Cup will not be staged this season.

The promotion of LASK Linz prompted Franz Grad, the president of Pasching, to sell off his club's licence to Klagenfurt-based FC Karnten because he believed that having three top-flight clubs within 50km of each other was unviable (SV Ried are also in the vicinity). Karnten then underwent a name change, to Austria Karnten, in memory of the glory days of Austria Klagenfurt.

The new entity play at the city's brand-new 30,000 all-seater stadium, a venue for Euro 2008, on the shores of Lake Worthersee.

LASK, who beat Karnten 1-0 on the opening day of the season, signed nine players this summer, including former Austrian internationals Michael Baur and Christian Mayrleb. Their star is veteran Croatia-born playmaker Ivica Vastic.

Harry Miltner

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

St Patrick's transfer splash

St Patrick's Athletic were quick off the mark in the transfer window, signing Dave Rogers from Derry City, former Under-21 international Michael Keane from English side Rotherham and Billy Gibson from Scotland's Partick Thistle.

Cork City now have three international midfielders in their squad after Joe Gamble won his first cap on the US tour in May. The other two are February signings Colin Healy and Gareth Farrelly, who are now free to play for Cork having been ineligible until July 1 after being on the books of two other clubs since the previous July.

Scot John Robertson, former boss at Hearts and Livingston, has succeeded Pat Fenlon at Derry City.

This year's FAI Cup Final will be played at the Royal Dublin Society's grounds since the Lansdowne Road stadium, the usual venue, is closed for redevelopment.

Sean Creedon

LIECHTENSTEIN

Heinz variety

Former Swiss international Heinz Hermann has taken the coaching reins at Vaduz, replacing Hanjo Weller. The 49-year-old, who won 117 caps and was Swiss footballer of the year five times running, has previously had coaching roles at Waldhof Mannheim in Germany and Basle.

Roger Prinzen, the longest-serving coach in the country, has left Balzers. His replacement will be Michael Nushohr, a former player with the club.

The Euro 2008 qualifier against Spain in June attracted a record crowd, 5,739, for a match in the principality. The previous best of 5,500 was set in 1974.

Graeme Crawford

BELGIUM

Youth opportunities

Eye-catcher...Tom De Mul's form has earned a move to Sevilla

THREE OF THE national Under-21 side that reached the European Championship semi-finals were immediately on the move at club level. Right-winger Tom De Mul has joined Sevilla from Ajax, central defender and captain Nicolas Lombaerts went to Zenit St Petersburg from Gent and left-back Sebastien Pocognoli to AZ Alkmaar from Genk.

Nigerian Manaseh Ishiaku, who scored the only goal of Club Brugge's Cup Final victory over Standard Liege, has joined Duisburg.

Standard have suffered a player exodus – star man Sergio Conceicao left for Kuwait, right-back Eric Deflandre went to FC Brussels and Karel Geraerts returned to Club Brugge.

Champions Anderlecht were reinforced by the signings of Brazilian midfielder Triguinho from Sao Caetano and former Charleroi striker Cyril Thereau from Steaua Bucharest.

Anderlecht were set to face promoted Mechelen on the opening day of the season, August 3. Mechelen had descended as far as the third level since capturing the European Cup-winners Cup in 1988.

Relegated Lierse were set to open the new season at home to Virton, the only team from Luxembourg to compete in Belgium's top two divisions.

Norwegian Trond Sollied has taken charge of Gent for the second time. He succeeds Georges Leekens, now at Lokeren.

Nicholas Harling

Berlin-bound...Favre

SWITZERLAND

Favre leaves at the top

LUCIEN FAVRE caused shock when deciding to quit Zurich, whom he had led to the championship for the past two seasons, to take charge of Hertha Berlin. His assistant, Harry Gamperle, opted to join him.

Zurich's new boss is national Under-21 coach Bernard Challandes, who was immediately confronted with the task of finding replacements for departing internationals Xavier Margairaz (Osasuna), Blerim Dzemaili (Bolton) and Gokhan Inler (Udinese).

Basle, last season's runners-up, lost league top scorer Mladen Petric to Borussia Dortmund, Ricardo Cabanas to Koln and Boris Smiljanic to Grasshopper. But both Marco Streller (Stuttgart) and Benjamin Huggel (Frankfurt) have returned to Basle.

Neuchatel Xamax, who regained their top-flight spot after one season away, signed former Basle star Julio Hernan Rossi from Nantes. The Argentinian scored 59 goals in 109 games for Basle.

Ivar von Rulach

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High hopes...striker Morten Nordstrand (right) has joined FC Copenhagen from Nordsjaelland for £1.6m, a record fee between Danish clubs

DENMARK

Summer of shame

DANISH FOOTBALL emerges from a summer of crisis and introspection hoping that the new league season can spark an upturn in fortunes both for its top clubs and the national team.

The country's soccer, which for so long was proud of its spirited but peaceful national team fans, reached a nadir when a supposed supporter attacked referee Herbert Fandel during Denmark's home Euro 2008 qualifier against bitter rivals Sweden in June.

An appeal brought a slight lessening of UEFA's punishment – only two home qualifiers to be played away from Copenhagen rather than four – but the match was still awarded 3-0 to the Swedes and the shame of the night will take a long time to subside.

Qualifying for Euro 2008 now seems a very distant prospect. Morten Olsen's side will probably have to win all their remaining ties, including the highly sensitive return fixture in Sweden on September 8.

If there is to be some solace, it may come from FC Copenhagen, as they aim to repeat their feat of last season and reach the Champions League group stage.

The club, who have proved themselves the best not only in Denmark but also the whole of Scandinavia in the past few years, have been busy strengthening their squad, buying up the best Danish youngsters who have not been tempted overseas.

A key signing may be midfielder Rasmus Wurtz from AaB Aalborg, a former captain of the national Under-21s and the most likely long-term replacement for Thomas Gravesen in the senior national side.

Striker Morten Nordstrand, who scored 19 goals in 33 games for Nordsjaelland last season, could prove another excellent buy. He came at a high cost, though, £1.6million, a record fee between Danish clubs.

Jim Holden

SWEDEN

Brazilian bounce

Unheralded Kalmar have risen to second in the League after getting the most from a number of bargain Brazilian signings. However, two of the star performers have now left the club, suggesting the second half of the season could be more challenging. Top scorer Ari da Silva Ferreira has moved to Holland's AZ Alkmaar, bringing Kalmar a healthy profit, while midfielder Fabio Augusto returned to Brazil without any explanation.

Halmstads, a point behind Kalmar and four behind leaders Elfsborg, are looking good again after a couple of indifferent seasons.

Their revival has been aided by the upbeat form of midfielder Dusan Djukic, who is now playing in a more attacking role.

Elfsborg have sold defender Jon Jonsson to Toulouse.

Pentti Hietanen

FINLAND

HJK hit as Ghazi quits

The problems have mounted for HJK Helsinki in their centenary year, losing prolific Algerian forward Farid Ghazi after making a poor start to the league campaign. The 33-year-old, who was sent off in his final game for the club, cited personal reasons for quitting the club.

Ghazi has been replaced by Hermanni Vuorinen, last season's top scorer with Honka who had had an unsuccessful spell at Norwegian club Fredrikstad.

However, HJK coach Keith Armstrong has expressed his concerns about the club's limited transfer budget, saying: "Good money can buy good players. Sadly, potentially good players go to Russia or even to Cyprus rather than to Finland."

VPS Vaasa have appointed former international Janne Lindberg as coach.

Pentti Hietanen

ICELAND

FH face a fight

FH, chasing their fourth consecutive league title, were on top after 10 of the 18 rounds but only by two points from Valur. KR, tipped to be serious title contenders before the season began, were rock bottom. They took just one point from their first seven games, the worst start by any club since the 10-team top division was launched in 1977.

Rab Christie

ESTONIA

Goes gone

National coach Jelle Goes quit three weeks after the Euro 2008 qualifying defeats against Croatia and England. "I have worked for seven years in Estonia, but now I feel I have to go on with my life," said the Dutchman, who had led Estonia since October 2004. He also worked with the Under-21s.

Former national team midfielder Kert Haavistu has been forced to end his career at the age of 27 because of recurrent injuries. "Training and playing through pain was no fun," Haavistu said.

Andres Must

LATVIA

Maris Splits

Latvia forward Maris Verpakovskis joined a second club, Hajduk Split, on loan from Kyiv Dynamo after failing to earn a permanent contract with Getafe. The striker had been at the Spanish club since December, but scored only one goal in 12 games. Viktors Dobrecovs, a former league top scorer, has returned from Estonia to join Daugava.

Metalurgs Liepaja were 11 points clear in the League in mid-July and also into the semi-finals of the Baltic Cup.

Andres Must

WALES

A first win – but not by enough

Llanelli became the first Welsh club to win an InterToto Cup game when beating Vetra of Lithuania 5-3 at home in the second leg. However, their 3-1 defeat in the opening tie meant they exited on away goals.

The Welsh Premier League has been granted membership of the Association of European Professional Football Leagues organisation.

Mel Thomas

NORTHERN IRELAND

Plans for Nigel

Nigel Worthington has been appointed manager of the national side. The 45-year-old, who won 66 caps between 1986 and 1997, is under contract until the end of the Euro 2008 qualifiers.

Irish FA president Jim Boyce resigned after a 12-year reign after tying in a ballot with Raymond Kennedy as he sought re-election for a further term.

Champions Linfield's biggest signing to date is versatile left-sided midfielder Damien Curry from Newry City. Glentoran's new manager is former international captain Alan McDonald.

Roy Kitson

Record domestic fee...Brown

NORWAY

Stabaek thrust on

On the offensive...Stabaek's Daniel Nannskog narrowly misses out against Start

STABAEK DID NOT look back after losing their opening game, winning eight and drawing four of their next 12 to top the table at the mid-summer break.

Swedish coach Jan Jonson has created an attack-minded team, with strikers Daniel Nannskog and Veigar Gunnarsson well supported by midfielders Soman Tchoyi, a Cameroonian, and Alanzinho. The small, quick Brazilian was the revelation of the first half of the season, with his dazzling runs creating havoc in defences.

Stabaek's only disappointment was that Petter Furuseth Olsen failed to settle after his arrival from Sweden, and he has been sold to Viborg in Denmark.

Main challengers Brann, two points off the pace, surprisingly sold top scorer Bengt Saeternes to another Danish side, OB Odense. The 32-year-old scored 38 goals in 77 matches in his four years in Bergen. There is said to be a bad atmosphere in the Brann camp after a spat between coach Mons Mjelde and captain Martin Andresen.

Lillestrom have bought Austrian midfielder Markus Kieseneber to replace Kasey Wehrman, who joined Fredrikstad. Lyn's gamble on Argentinian pair Matias Almeyda and Jose Flores did not pay off. The pair had only short-term deals and did not have their contracts renewed.

Sigurd Odegaard

SCOTLAND

Strachan splashes out

GORDON STRACHAN, who has won the league title in both his seasons in charge at Celtic, has shown his determination to stay on top by making a number of high-profile signings.

He splashed out £4.4million on Hibernian midfielder Scott Brown – a record fee between Scottish clubs – and £3m on towering Italian midfielder Massimo Donati from Milan. Australian international forward Scott McDonald was lured from Motherwell, and New Zealand striker Chris Killen followed Brown from Easter Road to Parkhead. Brown and McDonald had been linked with moves to Rangers before opting for Celtic.

Rangers' two biggest signings of the early summer were United States midfielder DaMarcus Beasley from PSV Eindhoven and Scotland midfielder Lee McCulloch from Wigan.

Alan Fairley

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GREECE

Theo to the rescue

Silver lining...Theo Zagorakis, the former Greece captain, has taken over at PAOK

FINANCIALLY troubled PAOK Salonika have been taken over by former Greece captain Theo Zagorakis. He heads a five-member governing board, which was given approval by a court to settle debts and unpaid taxes totalling an estimated £20million within six months. The new administration has urged fans to show their support for the club by buying season tickets. The target sales figure of 12,000 would be a 50 per cent increase on last season.

There has also been a takeover across town at Iraklis, with popular singer Antonis Remos now at the helm. Iraklis fans attacked the club's headquarters in early July, starting fires and damaging property in anger at the failure by the management to attract new private investors. That was the cue for Remos to come in as saviour, along with four businessmen.

There is a rosier picture at AEK Athens, who were facing bankruptcy a few seasons ago. According to figures presented by club boss Demis Nikolaidis, a former AEK player, £13m of the club's debts of £15m when his administration took over have now been repaid.

Lou Economopoulos

MONTENEGRO

Top two under new management

Zeta coach Dejan Vukicevic resigned without explanation two weeks after steering the club to the league title. The assumption is that he wanted to look for a new challenge after four years at the club, or that he and club boss Radojica Bozovic had failed to agree on new financial terms. Serb Slobodan Halilovic has now taken the reins.

Buducnost, last season's runners-up, also have a new coach. Sasa Petrovic, who was in charge of Kom Podgorica last term, replaces Bozo Vukovic.

Rudar Pljevlja won the Cup Final, beating Sutjeska Niksic 2-1.

The national team lost both games at the Kirin Cup in Japan – 2-0 against the hosts and 1-0 against Colombia.

Dr Novak Jovanovic, president of the Montenegrin FA between 1986 and 2001, has died at the age of 70.

Vladimir Novak

MACEDONIA

Ban threat lifted

Macedonia have avoided suspension from international competition after federation president Hari Hadzi-Risteski and his executive were restored to power following a struggle with a rebel grouping. The so-called Board for Change claimed to have the support of a majority of federation congress members and attempted to install former international referee Emil Bozinovski as the new president. UEFA and FIFA had threatened to ban the national team and Macedonian clubs if the country's football did not get its house in order.

Serbian Radmilo Ivancevic has resigned as coach of Makedonija after his side lost 7-0 on aggregate to Cherno More of Bulgaria in the InterToto Cup. His replacement is Zoran Stratev, who achieved the biggest ever success at club level in Macedonian football when leading Vardar to the third qualifying round of the Champions League in 2003-04.

Michel Stojmanovski

CROATIA

Eduardo sale puts Dinamo in the money

The biggest summer deal by far was Eduardo da Silva's move to Arsenal from Dinamo Zagreb. The champions received around £12million for the Brazil-born Croatian international striker, who has signed a four-year deal.

Hajduk Split have two returnees – Igor Tudor, after nine years at Juventus, and Srdjan Andric, after three years at Panathinaikos. Hajduk have also taken two players on loan from Kyiv Dynamo – Romanian Florin Cernat and Latvian Maris Verpakovskis.

Ivan Rakitic, born in Switzerland to Croatian parents, has decided to play for Croatia. The 19-year-old Schalke midfielder has played for Switzerland at youth level.

Zdravko Rek

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Undertakers cause grave problem

Police used teargas to disperse a crowd of hooligan Partizan Belgrade

supporters outside the ground after their team's 6-1 UEFA Cup victory against Zrinjski in Mostar. The fans, known as The Undertakers, also caused disturbances during the game, forcing the referee to suspend play for 10 minutes.

National coach Fuad Muzurovic has been told he can continue in his job after suffering heart problems.

Zdravko Reic

ALBANIA

Partizani on the march

Partizani, the country's most popular team, have bought four players as they aim to end the dominance of cross-town rivals SK Tirana and end their own 14-year title drought. The new arrivals are international central defender Tefik Osmani from Elbasani, forward Skerdi Bejzade (Vllaznia Shkoder) and midfielders Bledar Shkembi and Bledar Devolli (both Teuta Durres).

"Now we can compete like equals with Tirana [the winners of four of the last five titles]," coach Hasan Lika declared. "Every year we have been contenders, but this time we can be number one. With these signings we will be a complete team. We needed a good player in every part of the field last season, and now we have them."

Gezim Nushi

ISRAEL

Fans aim to wreck Rosso deal

A group of Maccabi Haifa fans vandalised the car of coach Roni Levy in protest at his attempts to re-sign veteran Croatian midfielder Giovanni Rosso. Rosso was a hero at Haifa but then joined rivals Maccabi Tel Aviv two seasons ago.

Beitar Jerusalem will become the first Israeli club to host foreign opposition outside Tel Aviv when they play FC Copenhagen in the second qualifying round of the Champions League in early August.

The start of the Israeli league season was brought forward by a week to mid-August to allow the national team players to gain a little more match fitness before the crucial Euro 2008 qualifier against England at Wembley on September 8.

Ori Lewis

MALTA

Hibernians top reps

Cup holders Hibernians won the first silverware of the season, seeing off champions Marsaxlokk and league runners-up Sliema Wanderers in the Euro Challenge Cup, the competition for Malta's European representatives.

Marsaxlokk face a tough task in defending their title after losing four internationals – Andre Schembri, Justin Haber, Daniel Bogdanovic and Luke Dimech. The latter pair are looking for clubs in England, having opted not to renew their contracts.

Valletta captain Gilbert Agius has been voted player of the season, for 2006-07, for a record third time.

Domenico Aquilina

New on the Block...Togolese Eric Akoto

SERBIA

Partizan: the crisis continues

Troubled start...Brazilian Juca has joined beleaguered Partizan

THERE IS NO end in sight to the crisis at Partizan Belgrade. On June 19, chairman Nenad Popovic and the entire executive board, all in charge only since last December, stepped down, thereby avoiding being pushed out by a censure vote against them from the club's general assembly. It was decided that a provisional board should take charge for three months. Then the club were thrown out of the UEFA Cup because of their fans' hooliganism during a tie at Bosnian side Zrinjski (see Bosnia-Herzegovina story).

Partizan and champions Red Star have both bought several foreigners. Partizan's newcomers are Brazilians Juca (a midfielder) and Vitor Hugo (forward), Guinea-Bissau midfielder Moreira and Senegalese attacking midfielder or forward Lamine Diarra. Red Star signed three South American strikers – Argentinian Hernan Barcos, Ecuadorean Franklin Salas and Colombian Mauricio Molina – plus Portuguese midfielder Lukas and Polish international left-back Grzegorz Bronowicki. The champions sold two forwards – Dusan Djokic to Club Brugge and Milan Purovic to Sporting Lisbon.

Mladost Apatin pulled out of the top flight four weeks before the start of the new season because of financial problems. Napredak Krusevac, who lost the promotion/relegation play-off against Borac Cacak, have gone up after all, taking the spare berth.

Vladimir Novak

SLOVENIA

Interblock buy big

INTERBLOCK'S wealthy president Joca Pececnik has splashed out again as he attempts to make the club a force. Interblock barely survived in the top flight last term, Pececnik's first at the helm, staying up only after winning a play-off against Bonifika.

But the squad have now been bolstered by a number of signings. They include Ermin Rakovic, the second highest league scorer last term, from Maribor, Togolese international Eric Akoto (Grazer AK) and two quality Croatians – Krunoslav Rendulic (Rijeka) and Ivan Jolic (Hapoel Tel Aviv).

The Maribor players have been threatened with violence by "fans" if they do not win the title. The ultimatum, made at a training session, came after the team lost 5-2 on aggregate to Serbian side Hajduk Kula in the InterToto Cup.

Champions Domzale won the Super Cup, beating cup winners Koper. But the club have been put up for sale by president Stane Orazem because of financial difficulties.

Zdravko Reic

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UKRAINE

Militia mayhem

THE COUNTRY suffered its worst ever crowd trouble during the Cup Final between Kyiv Dynamo and Shakhtar Donetsk, but there was condemnation of the heavy-handedness by the huge police contingent – over 3,200 officers were on duty at Dynamo's Olympiyskyi stadium – that contributed to the violence.

The fighting reportedly started when Dynamo ultras saluted their side's opening goal in the 2-1 win by igniting firecrackers as a special militia sub-division waded into them, beating supporters indiscriminately. In response, the Dynamo fans threw seats, bottles and fireworks at the militia. There were 22 arrests, while the injury count was 30 fans and six militia officers.

"I have never experienced anything like this," said veteran Dynamo midfielder Serhii Rebrov, who had not been selected to play because of injury. "All of us sitting on the bench were looking not at the pitch but at the mad actions of the militia in the stands."

Ukraine's heavyweight boxing champion Vitali Klitschko also condemned the militia's actions. "The militia can beat up fans and there's no responsibility attached to them. I think it's a humiliation for the country that has gained the right to host the Euro 2012 finals."

Vasyl Fathutdinov, Ukraine's deputy minister of internal affairs, said that 20 officers would be punished for over-reaction during the game. Meanwhile, Dynamo were fined £3,500.

The club duly wrapped up the Double, beating Karpaty 2-1 in their penultimate league game to ensure they took the title back from Shakhtar. Dynamo also beat their arch-rivals 4-2 on penalties in the Super Cup after a 2-2 draw.

Shakhtar made the biggest transfer deal of the summer, splashing out £6.5million on Cristiano Lucarelli from Livorno. The 31-year-old is the first Italian to play in Ukraine's top flight. Dynamo's two big signings were Guinean striker Ismael Bangoura (Le Mans, £4m) and Brazilian attacking midfielder Michael (Palmeiras, £2m).

Oleg Zadernovsky

Heavy-handed...the security forces were condemned for their brutality during the Cup Final

CZECH REPUBLIC

Smicer back at Slavia

Vladimir Smicer has returned to Slavia Prague 11 years after moving abroad. The Euro 96 veteran has signed a one-year deal with last season's runners-up, with whom he hopes to re-launch his injury-plagued international career. The contract also includes an agreement that the 34-year-old midfielder, who was released by Bordeaux at the end of last season, will take a management role at Slavia when he ends his playing career.

Mlada Boleslav, who finished third last season, will be coached by Ludek Zajic next season following Dusan Uhrin Jnr's move to Romanian side Politehnica Timisoara. Boleslav have also lost last season's league top scorer, Lubos Pecka, to German second division side Alemannia Aachen, initially on loan.

Ambitious Slovan Liberec, league champions in 2006, had a disastrous start under coach Michal Zach, crashing out of the InterToto Cup against Kazakh side Tobol Kostanay 3-1 on aggregate. Zach replaced Vitezslav Lavicka, who stepped down.

The Czech FA's two highest-ranking officials have both been linked to scandals. According to *Totalsport* magazine, chairman Pavel Mokry collaborated with the Communist-era StB secret police in the 1980s. Deputy chairman Vlastimil Kostal was involved in a traffic collision with two other cars after appearing to drink a glass of wine at a press conference. The Czech Republic has a zero-alcohol driving law. The police officer in attendance at the crash scene failed to give Kostal a breath test and was later sacked following an internal inquiry. Mokry and Kostal both deny any wrongdoing.

Sam Beckwith

POLAND

Legia expelled from European competition

Legia Warsaw were thrown out of the InterToto Cup and banned from one future UEFA competition after their fans went on the rampage during the second round, first leg tie at Vetra of Lithuania.

At half-time, with their team losing 2-0, Legia hooligans invaded the pitch, throwing stones at the police and attacking them with metal bars. After half an hour, the match officials decided to abandon the game, which was awarded to Vetra, 3-0.

Legia have sold 20-year-old forward Dawid Janczyk to CSKA Moscow for £2.75million, the highest fee ever paid for a player from the Polish League. Janczyk starred for the Under-20s at the World Cup in Canada, hitting three goals in four games.

Legia have appointed Jan Urban as long-term coach, to replace caretaker Jacek Zielinski.

Champions Zaglebie Lubin have lost last season's main attacking weapon, Lukasz Piszczek, after Hertha Berlin recalled him from his year-long loan. New arrivals are Portuguese defender Tiago Damil Gomes and Brazilian striker Andre Nunesa.

Dariusz Kurowski

BULGARIA

Penev back in charge

Dimitar Penev, who led Bulgaria to fourth place at the 1994 World Cup, their best performance, has been reappointed as national team coach. His agreement ended almost two months of wrangling about who would be the long-term successor to Hristo Stoichkov, who had resigned to take charge of Celta Vigo. Levski Sofia coach Stanimir Stoilov had filled the void, winning both his games at the helm, home and away against Belarus in the Euro 2008 qualifiers in June.

Manol Velev, the president of Sofia club Akademik, was in a critical condition after being shot in the head outside his office. The incident came shortly after the murder of Lokomotiv Plovdiv president Alexander Tassev.

Rumen Paytashev

BELARUS

Yuri goner

National coach Yuri Puntus has quit following the team's dismal performances in the Euro 2008 qualifiers. He had succeeded Anatoliy Baidachnyi in February 2006.

Oleg Zademovsky

HUNGARY

Ferencvaros sue FA

Ferencvaros, the country's most successful and popular club, are taking the FA to court, claiming that their demotion to the second division last summer because of financial difficulties deprived them of vital income. The Green Eagles lost out on the one promotion spot on the last day of last season to Nyiregyhaza.

Ferencvaros' financial woes are such that they are being forced to sell their Ulloi ut stadium to the highest bidder. Meanwhile, star forward Attila Tokoli has quit to join unheralded Paks, complaining that Ferencvaros had not paid him enough.

Peterjon Cresswell

Restoration job...Hagi at Steaua Bucharest

RUSSIA

Big names thrown off Lokomotiv

Put his foot in it...Dmitri Loskov has been ditched by Lokomotiv

ANATOLI BYSHOVETS, coach of underperforming Lokomotiv Moscow, has ditched two star players in an attempt to get the team back on track.

Long-time captain and playmaker Dmitri Loskov got the push after rowing with Byshovets during half-time of a league game. Loskov, now at Saturn, followed another Lokomotiv hero, Vadim Evseev, whom Byshovets claimed did not fit into his new tactical system. However, some pundits believe that Evseev, who has stepped down a division with Torpedo Moscow, was dropped mainly because he also had a personality conflict with the coach.

Lokomotiv, who finished third last season and were champions in 2002 and 2004, were only seventh at the halfway stage, 10 points behind leaders Zenit St Petersburg.

The country's referees are upset at the Russian Football Union's policy of inviting foreigners to officiate top games, even threatening to go on strike. But before such drastic action FIFA referee Yuri Baskakov said he and his colleagues may simply ask their counterparts not to accept RFU invitations.

Victor Gusev

ROMANIA

Hagi looks back to the future

GHEORGHE HAGI, the country's greatest player, has taken the coaching reins at former club Steaua Bucharest. He replaces Cosmin Olaroiu, who left for Saudi side Al Hilal having steered the club to runners-up spot behind city rivals Dinamo and into the Champions League qualifiers.

"Steaua must revive their glory years, when they qualified regularly for the latter stages of European competitions," said Hagi, a member of the Steaua team that reached the European Cup Final in 1989, the year before he left to join Real Madrid.

Dinamo have bought three Romanians from abroad – striker Florin Bratu (from Nantes) and defenders Valentin Nastase (Ascoli) and Flavius Stoican (Shakhtar Donetsk).

Cup winners Rapid Bucharest have appointed Italian Cristiano Bergodi as coach, replacing Razvan Lucescu.

CFR Cluj, who finished third last season, now have no fewer than 13 Portuguese players on their books after buying another five this summer.

Radu Timofte

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ARGENTINA

Diaz puts San Lorenzo back on top of the pile

Ramon conquest...coach Diaz is hoisted high after San Lorenzo sealed their title win

IN THE OPENING championship, San Lorenzo finished only in mid-table with a dispirited team who appeared to be going from bad to worse. Their transformation into closing title winners came with the signing of coach Ramon Diaz, who created a cohesive unit on a limited budget and, above all, motivated the squad.

San Lorenzo, whose last title came in 2001, finished six points clear of closest challengers Boca Juniors, with opening title winners Estudiantes a further two points back in third.

Significantly, Diaz fielded four rejects of River Plate, his former club as a player and coach – defender Cristian Tula, midfielders Osmar Ferreyra and Cristian Ledesma, and leading scorer Gaston Fernandez. The latter paid tribute to the boss, saying: "The title was won 50 per cent by the players and 50 per cent by Diaz."

Diaz, who formed a deadly attacking duo with Diego Maradona as Argentina won the Under-20 World Cup in 1979, had considerable success as River Plate coach between 1996 and 2002. He won five league titles and the Libertadores Cup in his first year in charge but was then dismissed by president Jose Maria Aguilar. Until taking charge of San Lorenzo this year, Diaz held only one other coaching position – a seven-month spell at English lower league side Oxford United in the 2004-05 season.

Current River coach Daniel Passarella has come under more pressure to step down after the club finished only fourth – they have now failed to win a league title for three years. Initially, the former national team captain said he intended to see out his contract, which runs until the end of 2009, but changed his tune to say he would quit at the end of the year if River had failed to win any silverware by then.

For the first time since the start of the two-championship season format in 1991, the club with most points during the entire campaign (Boca Juniors) did not win either of the titles. Boca were runners-up in both.

All 2007-08 top-division matches are to be televised, though only one on any weekend will be on free-to-view. TV rights income has doubled under the new deal to £30million for the season, though this is much lower than in many European countries. Some 83 per cent goes to the top-division clubs, with a fifth of the total going to the Big Two, Boca and River.

Eric Weil

CANADA

Toronto up and away

New MLS side Toronto FC, chased out of their home because of the Under-20 World Cup, managed to lose only one of five games on their extended road trip. The run put the side only a few points off a play-off place with 14 games remaining. However, coach Mo Johnston expected even better, saying: "A lot of people would grade us above that, but I would grade us B-minus."

United Soccer Leagues club Vancouver Whitecaps suffered a mid-season crisis, going on a six-game winless run after losing Cuban striker Eduardo Sebrango to injury and English keeper Tony Caig, who has joined Scottish Premier League side Gretna.

Philippe Germain

BRAZIL

Dodo grounded by doping ban

Weighty argument...Botafogo's Dodo (right) was provisionally suspended for 30 days after testing positive for a banned slimming drug

BOTAFOGO'S excellent start to the national championship was rudely interrupted by a bizarre doping episode. Striker Dodo was provisionally suspended for 30 days after testing positive for Fenproporex, a banned drug that produces a rapid weight loss, following a 4-0 win over Vasco da Gama.

However, the result of the test was thrown into doubt when the University of Sao Paulo found that some medicine that had been prescribed to the player by the club's doctors had been contaminated by the substance. Police closed the pharmacy that produced the medicine, although it was re-opened shortly afterwards, while Botafogo appealed the decision. Club director Carlos Montenegro went to the police to press charges of "a crime against the consumer".

"It wasn't Dodo's intention, nor the club's, for him to consume the substance," said Botafogo's football director Manoel Renha. Milton Luis Sant'ana, owner of the pharmacy, hit back, saying: "It's impossible that the pills left my pharmacy with Fenproporex... Who can guarantee that the pills sent to the university were not opened and then sealed again. I can't be held responsible for the capsules after they have left the pharmacy."

In their first game after Dodo's suspension, Botafogo lost their unbeaten record, crashing 3-0 to Santos. However, they were still top, five points clear of second-placed Goias after 11 of the 38 matches.

Santos leapt up to 11th after spending the early part of the campaign in the relegation zone. Vanderlei Luxemburgo had fielded a reserve team in the first few games as the club were also involved in the Libertadores Cup, in which they lost to Gremio in the semi-finals. They had barely got that defeat out of their system when two key players left – Ze Roberto for Bayern Munich and Cleber Santana for Atletico Madrid.

Luxemburgo told the directors he needed reinforcements quickly. "The club have to decide if they want to fight for the title and a place in next year's Libertadores, or if they want to fight against relegation," he said.

Brian Homewood

Prodigal son...Salas

CHILE

Universidad challenge

UNIVERSIDAD DE CHILE, declared bankrupt last year, have been sold to a group of Chilean and Mexican investors for £3.15million. The group, known as Azul Azul (Blue Blue), bought the right to administer the club for the next 30 years with an option for a further 15. It was the second attempt to sell the club, the first having failed in early May because there were no offers.

"I want to tell the members, supporters club and fans that, after a period of great turbulence, your institution has been put back on its feet," said Jose Manuel Edwards, who had been called in to administer the club following the bankruptcy announcement.

Edwards has faced angry opposition and abuse from the club's hardcore fans, led by the Los de Abajo gang (The Ones from Below), who have been opposed to the idea of selling off the club.

The new owners' first move was to appoint former Chile coach Arturo Salah. Salah, a former Universidad de Chile player, had previously been at modest Huachipato. Shortly afterwards, the club announced that former national team forward Marcelo Salas would return. Salas left six months ago because of differences with Edwards and had been inactive since then.

Brian Homewood

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JAPAN

Wanchope walks

Sayonara...Wanchope took his leave of FC Tokyo after just 12 appearances

COSTA RICA striker Paulo Wanchope left FC Tokyo at the end of June after scoring just two goals in 12 league games. "I tried various ways to adjust to the rhythm of Japanese football but sadly couldn't produce the results," admitted Wanchope, whose side lay only 12th in the 18-team division.

There have been troubles for two other foreign signings. Brazilian defender Emerson Thome suffered a thigh injury in only his fourth appearance for Vissel Kobe and was sidelined for over two months. He was then sent off for a challenge inside the box in his return game at Kawasaki Frontale on June 30, the final day of play before the league break for the Asian Cup.

Meanwhile, Bulgarian defender Ilian Stoyanov had his contract terminated by JEF United after falling out irrevocably with coach Amar Osim. Stoyanov was a big factor in JEF's strong performances during the past two years under the boss's father, Ivica Osim, which included consecutive League Cup triumphs, but has been highly critical of the son's coaching capabilities since Ivica left to take over the national team. JEF made a disastrous start this season, though three wins in their four games before the break lifted them to 14th place.

A similar drama was played out at Vissel Kobe, where captain Atsuhiro Miura, the former international midfielder, fell out with coach Hiroshi Matsuda and was finally released after failing to return at the end of a club-imposed suspension.

On the transfer front, international midfielder Mitsuo Ogasawara has returned to Kashima Antlers from Messina in Italy.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

ROUND-UP

ASIA

● Seven VIETNAMESE referees have been convicted for their part in a bribery scandal in 2004. Luong Trung Viet, the central figure in the affair, was jailed for seven years, while the other six received sentences ranging from two years (suspended) to four years six months. Viet bribed the other six to treat the East Asia Bank club favourably during national championship games. It was alleged the club's managing director had transferred nearly £3,000 into Viet's bank account, of which £2,350 had been passed to the other referees.

● Al Sadd beat Al Khor 5-4 on penalties in QATAR'S Emir's Cup Final to complete a clean sweep of major domestic titles. Al Sadd also won the League and the Heir Apparent's Cup.

● Al Wasl did the Double in the UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, adding the league title to the President's Cup.

● Saipa won the IRANIAN league title under the guidance of player-coach and former international star Ali Daei. Sepahan retained the League Cup, beating Saba Battery 4-0 on aggregate in the Final. The national team won the West Asian Football Federation Championship for the third time, overcoming Iraq 2-1 in the Final in Amman, Jordan.

● In BAHRAIN, league champions Muharraq made it a hat-trick of Crown Prince Cup triumphs when beating Al Najma 1-0 in the Final. Substitute striker Abdulla Al-Dekheel scored the goal.

● SAUDI ARABIA'S Al Ittihad, who had twice suffered defeats against Al Ahli in cup competitions this season, gained some revenge by beating their rivals 2-1 in the decider of the prestigious King's Cup.

● Seeb Club won the inaugural OMANI FA Cup.

● Kedah beat Perlis 4-2 on penalties to lift the MALAYSIAN FA Cup for the second time.

● NORTH KOREA will play in next year's East Asian Championship after beating Hong Kong 1-0 in the Final of the qualifying tournament. They will be up against hosts China, Japan and South Korea at the Chongqing event, in February.

Azam Mahmood

Smeltz good...the New Zealand striker (left) scores his first goal against Wales

OCEANIA

● NEW ZEALAND recorded one of their most impressive results when drawing 2-2 against Wales in a friendly at Wrexham despite being without seven leading players. Shane Smeltz twice put the All Whites ahead and almost grabbed a late winner, hitting a post with 18 minutes remaining. At club level, the striker is now contracted to newly formed Wellington Phoenix, who will play in Australia's A-League. The club have also signed a Brazilian quartet – Daniel, Cleberson, George and Felipe Campos – plus former Australian internationals Ross Aloisi and Richard Johnson.

● Ba maintained their stranglehold on FIJIAN soccer when beating Nadi in the Final of the Battle of the Giants tournament. Osea Vakatelesau scored a golden goal 18 minutes into extra-time after the game had finished 1-1.

● Beach soccer international James Naka hit two superb goals for club side KOSSA as they beat Koloafa 4-3 in the Final of the SOLOMON ISLANDS' championship.

● J S Baco took a record ninth championship in NEW CALEDONIA. However, they crashed out of the Oceania Champions League preliminaries 5-0 at home to VANUATU'S Tafea after having three men sent off. Tafea marched into the competition proper by thrashing University of Papua New Guinea 5-1.

● Manu Ura took the title in TAHITI, finishing a point clear of Tefana.

Paul Moon

On the level...Forlan scores Uruguay's equaliser against Australia in Sydney

AUSTRALIA

Mixed results

A DEPLETED national team lost 2-1 at home to Uruguay in the first of two warm-up games for the Asian Cup. Alvaro Recoba took advantage of a fumble by debutant keeper Brad Jones to hit the winner with 13 minutes remaining in Sydney's Telstra stadium, before a crowd of 61,795. Mile Sterjovski had given the hosts an early lead; Diego Forlan equalised just before the break.

The Socceroos found the going much easier away to Singapore four weeks later, winning 3-0 on goals from Mark Viduka (two) and Harry Kewell, two of the big names who had joined up with the squad since the Uruguay defeat.

Paul Moon

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CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Al Ahly in good health

EGYPT'S AL AHLY are on course for an unprecedented third successive Champions League title after winning their first three group games.

The Cairo side showed some rustiness after a brief break during their opening game against Al Hilal of Sudan, but eventually won with two late goals. But they stepped up the tempo a fortnight later in potentially their most difficult game, beating Ivorians ASEC Abidjan 1-0 away. The champions followed up by beating Esperance of Tunisia 3-0 in Cairo.

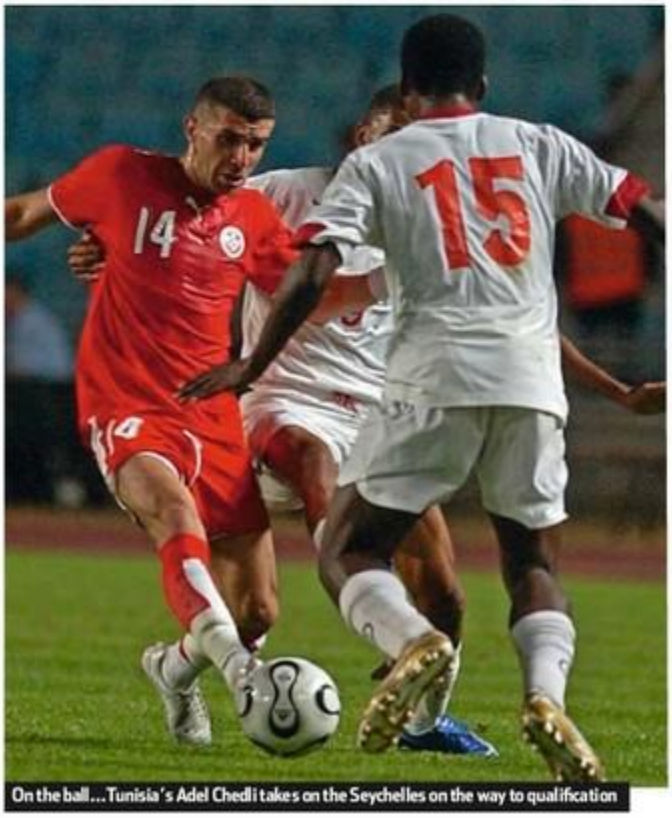
Last year, Al Ahly huffed and puffed their way to success, playing much of the campaign with an injury-hit squad. This year their squad is back up to full strength, setting up the possibility of an all-conquering run. Angolan Gilberto has returned after an 18-month lay-off with an Achilles tendon injury but was right back to form in his comeback game, against ASEC. Mohamed Barakat, the Egyptian international wide player, is also over a series of niggling injuries.

Al Ahly's rude health contrasts starkly with the fragility of some of the other Champions League contenders. Esperance, whose insatiable appetite for success has led to an array of coaches coming and going, surpassed even their own standards by employing a different coach for each of their first three games. Frenchman Jackie Dugueperoux was fired after the Tunisians managed only a 0-0 draw at home to ASEC. His successor, Faouzi Benzarti, back for a third spell at the club, quit to take charge of the Libyan national team after Esperance lost 2-0 at Al Hilal. Arbi Zouaoui was appointed caretaker for the Al Ahly game.

Algeria's JS Kabylie were also quick to fire their coach, Azzedine Ait Djoudi, after they lost 1-0 away to group stage debutants Al Ittihad of Libya. JSK promptly brought back Kamel Mouassa and his assistant Moussa Saib, the former Auxerre, Tottenham and Valencia midfielder.

Mark Gleeson

Title defence... Al Ahly players (in red) close down an ASEC Abidjan attack



On the ball... Tunisia's Adel Chedli takes on the Seychelles on the way to qualification

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALIFIERS

Taking shape

SIX COUNTRIES booked their place in next year's Nations Cup finals in the two rounds of qualifiers in June – Angola, Cameroon, Morocco, Nigeria, Sudan and Tunisia.

The final round of games (apart from in Group 2) will be played in September. Ivory Coast and South Africa will also ensure they make the finals in Ghana by avoiding defeat away to Gabon and at home to Zambia respectively. Home wins for DR Congo, Guinea, Senegal and Togo will put them through. Of the latter group, Togo have the toughest task. Their opponents are Mali, who are level on points and have a better goal difference.

The final Group Two matches have been postponed until October, but defending champions Egypt could book their finals berth with a game to spare by winning away to Burundi.

The winners of the 12 groups plus the three best runners-up qualify for the finals.

Mark Gleeson

ROUND-UP

- The CAMEROON federation is considering replacing coach Jules Nyongha with a high-profile European despite the fact that he steered them into the Nations Cup finals with a 100 per cent record.
- Anse Reunion won the SEYCHELLES Cup, beating St Louis 1-0 in the Final. Jude Bibi scored the goal.
- Al Ahly came from behind in extra-time to beat arch-rivals Zamalek 4-3 in the EGYPTIAN FA Cup Final.
- Mouloudia Alger beat neighbours USM Alger on penalties for a second successive year to win the ALGERIAN Cup.
- In BOTSWANA, Ecco City Green won the League for the first time.

Mark Gleeson

Picture: Johnny Bujega, Gibraltar Chronicle

Rhodes to glory...Gibraltar celebrate their victory over the hosts in the Island Games Final

Rock on top

GIBRALTAR WON THE Island Games football tournament for the first time, beating hosts Rhodes 4-0 in the Final in front of 6,500 people at the Diagoras stadium. John Paul Duarte put Gibraltar ahead, Joseph Chipolina scored a second and a Lee Casciaro brace finished off the Greek islanders.

"We are there, where we are supposed to be, at the top of football in the Island Games family," said Gibraltar FA vice-president Albert "Bubi" Buhagiar. The team's previous best performance in the biennial event had been in 1995, when, as hosts, they finished runners-up to the Isle of Wight.

The triumph may boost Gibraltar's attempt to join UEFA and thus emulate the Faroe Islands, who won the first two Island Games tournaments, in 1989 and 1991, before going on to join UEFA and FIFA. Gibraltar's application to join the European governing body was rebuffed in January but the FA plans to appeal.

Gibraltar had made hard work of their group, eventually winning through only because they had scored more goals than runners-up Jersey. The Rock side only just scrambled a 1-1 draw in their opening match, against the Channel Islanders, equalising five minutes from full-time. They then hung on to beat Games debutants Menorca 2-1 having had two players sent off, while the Spanish islanders had two goals disallowed. Jersey had beaten Menorca 1-0 in the group's opening game.

In the semis, Gibraltar beat Bermuda's Under-23 side 2-0 while Rhodes overcame Western Islands 1-0.

The hosts had easily topped their group, beating the Estonian island of Saarema 2-0 and Froya, a tiny island off Norway, 3-1.

Absentees

The Island Games Association had hoped to have 16 teams competing in Rhodes but only 11 entered. Neither the Shetland Islands, the holders, nor Guernsey, runners-up last time, travelled to this year's tournament. Greenland were also absent, the first time they had missed the event, citing financial constraints. However, they plan to be back at the next Games, on the Finnish island of Aland in 2009. The Orkneys and Falkland Islands were two other absentees.

Brian Johnston, who managed the 2005 Shetland team but has since stood down, says: "The main reason for not playing is the climate and original proposed fixture times. You would not ask a professional outfit to travel to Rhodes in July to play five or six competitive games in seven days in over 100 degrees of heat. Kicking off around 10am means you would be mad dogs in the midday sun come the end of every fixture."

The organisers appeared to realise the folly of the original schedule, switching kick-off times to late afternoon and dividing the entrants into four small groups, with just two games each, instead of the envisaged two large groups involving four or five games each.

Steve Menary

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RESULTS AUGUST 2007

INTERNATIONALS

COPA AMERICA

In Venezuela

Group A

June 26 - Merida
Uruguay 0
Peru 3 (Villalta 27, Marino 70, Guerrero 89)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Uruguay: Carini - Diogo, Lugano, Godin, D Rodriguez, Perez, Garcia, Canobbio (C Rodriguez 46), Estoyanoff (Vargas 80), Forlan, Sanchez (Abreu 66).
Peru: Butron - Villalta, Rodriguez, Acasiete, Galliquio, Bazalar, Vilchez, P Garcia (Marino 55), Farfan (De la Haza 80), Guerrero, Pizarro (Mendoza 77).

June 26 - San Cristobal
Venezuela 2 (Maldonado 20, Paez 55)
Bolivia 2 (Moreno 38, Arce 84)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Reinoso (Ecu)
Venezuela: Vega - Rey, M Mea Vitali, A Cichero, L Vera, Maldonado (Torrealba 77), Paez (Vielma 72), De Ornelas (Guerra 59), Rojas, Arango, H Gonzalez.
Bolivia: Galarza - Hoyos, Raldes, J M Pena, Alvarez, Reyes (D Pena 59), R Garcia, Mojica, J Vaca (Galindo 70), Arce, Moreno (Cabrera 74).

June 30 - San Cristobal
Bolivia 0
Uruguay 1 (Sanchez 58)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Toledo (USA)
Bolivia: Galarza - Hoyos, Raldes, J M Pena, Alvarez, Reyes (D Pena 71), R Garcia (Lima 29), Mojica, J Vaca (Cabrera 62), Arce, Moreno.
Uruguay: Carini - Diogo (I Gonzalez 56), Lugano, Scotti, D Rodriguez, Pereira, Perez, Garcia, C Rodriguez (Godin 89), Forlan (Estoyanoff 82), Sanchez.

June 30 - San Cristobal
Venezuela 2 (A Cichero 48, Arismendi 79)
Peru 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
Venezuela: Vega - H Gonzalez, Rey, A Cichero, Rouga (Edder Perez 37), M Mea Vitali, L Vera, Arango (C Gonzalez 74), Paez, Maldonado, De Ornelas (Arismendi 63). *Sent off: Paez 78min.*
Peru: Butron - Acasiete, Villalta (Marino 51), Rodriguez, Galliquio (Mendoza 75), P Garcia, Bazalar, Farfan, Vilchez, Guerrero, Pizarro (Ismodes 67). *Sent off: P Garcia 14min.*

July 3 - Merida
Peru 2 (Pizarro 34, 85)
Bolivia 2 (Moreno 24, Campos 45)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)
Peru: Butron - Galliquio (Herrera 55), Rodriguez, Villamarin, Vilchez, De la Haza, Marino, Ismodes (Jimenez 70), Farfan (Zuniga 44), Pizarro, Guerrero. *Sent off: Herrera 78min.*
Bolivia: H Suarez - Hoyos, J M Pena, Raldes, Alvarez, Reyes, Mojica (Ortiz 80), Campos (Galindo 67), J Vaca, Andaveris (Arce 58), Moreno.

July 3 - Merida
Venezuela 0
Uruguay 0
Ref: Simon (Bra)
Venezuela: Vega - H Gonzalez, A Cichero, Rey, Edder Perez, L Vera, M Mea Vitali (Fernandez 75), C Gonzalez, Arango, De Ornelas (Guerra 65), Maldonado (Torrealba 57).
Uruguay: Carini - Fucile, Lugano, Scotti, D Rodriguez, Pereira, Perez, Garcia, C Rodriguez, Sanchez (Recoba 67), Forlan (Abreu 79).

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Venezuela	3	1	2	0	4	2	5
Peru	3	1	1	1	5	4	4
Uruguay	3	1	1	1	1	3	4
Bolivia	3	0	2	1	4	5	2

Group B

June 27 - Puerto Ordaz
Ecuador 2 (Valencia 16, Benitez 23)
Chile 3 (Suazo 20, 80, Villanueva 86)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
Ecuador: Mora - De la Cruz, Hurtado, Bagui, G Espinoza, Castillo, E Tenorio, Mendez, Valencia, Benitez, C Tenorio (F Calcedo 75).
Chile: Bravo - Ormeno, Vargas, P Contreras, M Gonzalez, Melendez (Villanueva 72), Sanhueza, Valdivia, Fernandez (Lorca 46), Suazo, Navia (Riffo 46).

June 27 - Puerto Ordaz
Brazil 0
Mexico 2 (Castillo 23, R Morales 28)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Pezzotta (Arg)
Brazil: Doni - Maicon (Daniel Alves 78), Alex Costa, Juan, Mineiro, Gilberto, Elano (Afonso Alves 46), Gilberto Silva, Vagner Love, Diego (Anderson 46), Robinho.
Mexico: Ochoa - I Castro (J A Castro 74), Magallon, Marquez, Pinto, Arce, Correa, Torrado, R Morales (Lozano 78), Cacho (Bravo 69), Castillo.

July 1 - Maturin
Brazil 3 (Robinho pen 36, 84, 87)
Chile 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Torres (Par)
Brazil: Doni - Maicon (Daniel Alves 19), Juan, Alex Costa, Gilberto, Gilberto Silva, Mineiro, Elano (Josue 77), Anderson (Julio Baptista 46), Robinho, Vagner Love.
Chile: Bravo - Ormeno, Riffo (J Vargas 54), I Fuentes, P Contreras, Jara (Lorca 46), Sanhueza, Melendez (Iturra 26), M Gonzalez, Valdivia, Suazo.

July 1 - Maturin
Mexico 2 (Castillo 21, Bravo 79)
Ecuador 1 (Mendez 84)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Ortube (Bol)
Mexico: O Sanchez - I Castro, Magallon, Marquez, Pinto, Arce, Correa, Torrado, R Morales (Pineda 83), Cacho (Bravo 64), Castillo (Blanco 78).
Ecuador: Mora - De la Cruz, Hurtado, G Espinoza, Bagui (W Ayovi 71), Castillo, E Tenorio (Reasco 46), Mendez, Valencia, Benitez, C Tenorio (Borja 78).

July 4 - Puerto La Cruz
Mexico 0
Chile 0
Ref: Amarilla (Par)
Mexico: Ochoa - F Rodriguez, Pineda (Arce 80), Magallon, Lozano, Correa, A Medina, J A Castro, Guardado (Bautista 46), Blanco, Bravo (Landin 74).
Chile: Bravo - I Fuentes, Roco, P Contreras, Fierro, Sanhueza, Iturra, Tello, Villanueva (Fernandez 69), Lorca (M Gonzalez 76), Suazo.

July 4 - Puerto La Cruz
Brazil 1 (Robinho pen 56)
Ecuador 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pezzotta (Arg)
Brazil: Doni - Daniel Alves (Alex Silva 80), Alex Costa, Juan, Gilberto (Kleber 58), Gilberto Silva, Mineiro, Josue, Julio Baptista (Diego 73), Robinho, Vagner Love.
Ecuador: Elizaga - Bagui, Guagua, G Espinoza, Reasco, Mendez, Castillo, W Ayovi (F Calcedo 76), Valencia, Borja (C Tenorio 60), Benitez.

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mexico	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
Brazil	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
Chile	3	1	1	1	3	5	4
Ecuador	3	0	0	3	3	6	0

Group C

June 28 - Maracaibo
Paraguay 5 (Santa Cruz 30, 46, 80, Cabanas 84, 88)
Colombia 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
Paraguay: Villar - Veron, J C Caceres, Da Silva, Bonet, Morel, E Barreto, Riveros, Santana (Vera 78), O Cardozo (Cabanas 70), Santa Cruz (Lopez 83).
Colombia: Calero - Vallejo, Cordoba, Yepes, Arizala (Marin 63), Vargas, Viafara, Dominguez (Torres 56), Ferreira, Rodallega (Rey 76), E Perea.

June 28 - Maracaibo
Argentina 4 (Crespo 11, 60, Aimar 76, Tevez 84)
United States 1 (Johnson pen 9)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)
Argentina: Abbondanzieri - Zanetti, Ayala, G Milito, Heinze, Mascherano, Cambiasso (Aimar 58), Veron (Gago 87), Riquelme, Messi (Tevez 79), Crespo.
United States: Keller - Wynne, DeMerit, Feilhaber, Conrad, Bornstein, Olsen (Gaven 62), Clark (Beckerman 80), Mapp, Johnson, Twellman (Gomez 69).

July 2 - Barinas
United States 1 (Clark 35)
Paraguay 3 (E Barreto 29, O Cardozo 56, Cabanas 90)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Rivera (Per)
United States: Keller - Moor, DeMerit (Califf 64), Feilhaber, Conrad, Bornstein, Olsen (Mapp 71), Clark, Kljestan (Nguyen 80), Johnson, Twellman.
Paraguay: Villar (Bobadilla 54) - Veron, J C Caceres, Da Silva, Bonet, Morel, E Barreto, Riveros, Santana (Vera 77), O Cardozo (Cabanas 73), Santa Cruz.

July 2 - Maracaibo
Argentina 4 (Crespo pen 20, Riquelme 34, 45, D Milito 90)
Colombia 2 (E Perea 10, Castrillon 76)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Simon (Bra)
Argentina: Abbondanzieri - Zanetti, Ayala, G Milito, Heinze, Mascherano, Cambiasso, Veron (L Gonzalez 80), Riquelme, Messi (Tevez 84), Crespo (D Milito 21).
Colombia: Calero - Vallejo, Cordoba, L Perea, Arizala, Vargas, Viafara (Castrillon 61), Banguero, Ferreira (Torres 76), Rodallega, E Perea (Chitiva 67). *Sent off: Vargas 90min.*

July 5 - Barquisimeto
Colombia 1 (Castrillon 15)
United States 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Andarcia (Ven)
Colombia: Zapata - Zuniga, L Perea, Yepes, Arizala, Banguero, Viafara (Marin 55), Castrillon, Torres (Ferreira 85), Valoyes (Chitiva 78), Rodallega. *Sent off: Zapata 87min.*
United States: Guzan - Boswell, Pearce, Moor, Califf, Mapp (Davies 65), Beckerman, Clark, Kljestan, Gomez (Gaven 46), Johnson (Nguyen 72).

July 5 - Barquisimeto
Argentina 1 (Mascherano 79)
Paraguay 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
Argentina: Abbondanzieri - Ibarra, Burdisso, Diaz, Zanetti, L Gonzalez (Mascherano 66), Gago, Cambiasso (Messi 67), Aimar (Ayala 85), Palacio, Tevez.
Paraguay: Bobadilla - Veron, J C Caceres, Manzur, E Gonzalez, Vera, Santana (Santa Cruz 81), Torres, Dos Santos (E Barreto 69), Cabanas, Cuevas (Lopez 58).

GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	3	3	0	0	9	3	9
Paraguay	3	2	0	1	8	2	6
Colombia	3	1	0	2	3	9	3
United States	3	0	0	3	2	8	0

Top two in each group and the two third-placed sides with the best record qualified for quarter-finals

Quarter-finals

July 7 - San Cristobal
Venezuela 1 (Arango 41)
Uruguay 4 (Forlan 38, 90, Garcia 64, C Rodriguez 86)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)
Venezuela: Vega - H Gonzalez, Rey, A Cichero, Rojas, M Mea Vitali (Guerra 76), L Vera, Arango, Paez, Maldonado (C Gonzalez 71), De Ornelas (Arismendi 46).
Uruguay: Carini - Lugano, Scotti, D Rodriguez (Godin 89), Pereira, Garcia, Perez, C Rodriguez, Fucile, Forlan, Recoba (I Gonzalez 79).

July 7 - Puerto La Cruz
Chile 1 (Suazo 76)
Brazil 6 (Juan 16, Julio Baptista 23, Robinho 27, 50, Josue 68, Vagner Love 85)
HT: 0-3. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
Chile: Bravo - Ormeno, Contreras, I Fuentes, Jara, Fierro (Valdivia 46), Iturra, M Gonzalez (Fernandez 66), Sanhueza, Suazo, Lorca (Cabion 56).
Brazil: Doni - Maicon (Elano 71), Alex Costa, Juan (Naldo 73), Gilberto, Mineiro, Gilberto Silva, Josue, Julio Baptista, Robinho (Afonso Alves 65), Vagner Love.

July 8 - Maturin
Mexico 6 (Castillo pen 5, 38, Torrado 27, Arce 79, Blanco pen 87, Bravo 90)
Paraguay 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Pezzotta (Arg)
Mexico: O Sanchez - I Castro, Marquez, Magallon, Pinto, Arce (Blanco 80), Correa, Torrado, Guardado, Castillo (Bautista 54), Cacho (Bravo 65).
Paraguay: Bobadilla - Veron (Vera 46), J C Caceres, Da Silva, Bonet, Riveros, Morel, E Barreto, Santana (Zayas 4), O Cardozo (Cabanas 67), Santa Cruz. *Sent off: Bobadilla 3min.*

July 8 - Barquisimeto
Argentina 4 (Riquelme 47, 85, Messi 61, Mascherano 75)
Peru 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Simon (Bra)
Argentina: Abbondanzieri - Zanetti, Ayala, G Milito, Heinze, Mascherano, Cambiasso (Almar 83), Veron (Gago 71), Riquelme, Messi, D Milito (Tevez 46).
Peru: Butron - Villalta, Acasiete, Villamarin (Zuniga 64), Galliquio, De la Haza, Bazalar, Vilchez, Marino (Mendoza 74), Pizarro, Guerrero (P Garcia 55).

Semi-finals

July 10 - Maracaibo
Uruguay 2 (Forlan 45, Abreu 70)
Brazil 2 (Maicon 13, Julio Baptista 45)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Ruiz (Col)
Brazil 5-4 on pens
Uruguay: Carini - Lugano, Scotti, D Rodriguez (I Gonzalez 46), Pereira, Garcia, Perez (Gargano 75), C Rodriguez, Fucile, Forlan, Recoba (Abreu 46).
Brazil: Doni - Maicon, Juan, Alex Costa, Gilberto, Gilberto Silva, Mineiro, Josue (Fernando 73), Julio Baptista (Diego 73), Robinho, Vagner Love (Afonso Alves 79).

July 11 - Puerto Ordaz
Mexico 0
Argentina 3 (Heinze 44, Messi 61, Riquelme pen 66)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Chandia (Chl)
Mexico: O Sanchez - I Castro, Marquez, Magallon, Pinto, Arce, Torrado (A Medina 46), Correa (Pineda 83), Guardado, Castillo, Cacho (Bravo 46).
Argentina: Abbondanzieri - Zanetti, Ayala, G Milito, Heinze, Mascherano, Cambiasso, Veron (Gago 76), Riquelme (Almar 86), Messi, Tevez (Palacio 78).

Third-place play-off

July 14 - Caracas
Uruguay 1 (Abreu 22)
Mexico 3 (Blanco pen 36, Bravo 68, Guardado 76)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Reinoso (Ecu)
Uruguay: Carini - Valdez, Lugano, Scotti, Fucile, Pereira, Garcia (Gargano 79), I Gonzalez (Canobbio 75), C Rodriguez, Forlan (Sanchez 74), Abreu.
Sent off: Lugano 38min.
Mexico: Ochoa - J A Castro, Magallon, F Rodriguez, Pinto (Guardado 65), Torrado, Lozano (Correa 78), R Morales, Blanco, Bravo (Landin 88), Castillo.

Final

July 15 - Maracaibo
Brazil 3 (Julio Baptista 4, Ayala og 40, Daniel Alves 69)
Argentina 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Amarilla (Par)
Brazil: Doni - Maicon, Alex Costa, Juan, Gilberto, Mineiro, Josue, Elano (Daniel Alves 34), Julio Baptista, Robinho (Diego 90), Vagner Love (Fernando 90).
Argentina: Abbondanzieri - Zanetti, G Milito, Ayala, Heinze, Mascherano, Cambiasso (Almar 59), Veron (L Gonzalez 67), Riquelme, Messi, Tevez.

● *Copa America squads are on page 107*

UNDER-20 WORLD CUP

In Canada

Group A

July 1: Canada 0 Chile 3.
July 2: Congo 1 Austria 1.
July 5: Austria 1 Canada 0; Chile 3 Congo 0.
July 8: Canada 0 Congo 2; Chile 0 Austria 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Chile	3	2	1	0	6	0	7
Austria	3	1	2	0	2	1	5
Congo	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Canada	3	0	0	3	0	6	0

Group B

July 1: Jordan 1 Zambia 1; Spain 2 Uruguay 2.
July 4: Uruguay 1 Jordan 0; Zambia 1 Spain 2.
July 7: Spain 4 Jordan 2; Uruguay 0 Zambia 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	3	2	1	0	8	5	7
Zambia	3	1	1	1	4	3	4
Uruguay	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Jordan	3	0	1	2	3	6	1

Group C

July 2: Portugal 2 New Zealand 0; Gambia 0 Mexico 3.
July 5: New Zealand 0 Gambia 1; Mexico 2 Portugal 1.
July 8: Portugal 1 Gambia 2; New Zealand 1 Mexico 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mexico	3	3	0	0	7	2	9
Gambia	3	2	0	1	3	4	6
Portugal	3	1	0	2	4	4	3
New Zealand	3	0	0	3	1	5	0

Group D

June 30: Poland 1 Brazil 0; South Korea 1 United States 1.
July 3: United States 6 Poland 1; Brazil 3 South Korea 2.
July 6: Brazil 1 United States 2; Poland 1 South Korea 1.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
United States	3	2	1	0	9	3	7
Poland	3	1	1	1	3	7	4
Brazil	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
South Korea	3	0	2	1	4	5	2

Group E

June 30: North Korea 0 Panama 0; Argentina 0 Czech Republic 0.
July 3: Czech Republic 2 North Korea 2; Panama 0 Argentina 6.
July 6: Czech Republic 2 Panama 1; Argentina 1 North Korea 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	3	2	1	0	7	0	7
Czech Rep	3	1	2	0	4	3	5
North Korea	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Panama	3	0	1	2	1	8	1

Group F

July 1: Japan 3 Scotland 1; Nigeria 1 Costa Rica 0.
July 4: Costa Rica 0 Japan 1; Scotland 0 Nigeria 2.
July 7: Japan 0 Nigeria 0; Scotland 1 Costa Rica 2.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	3	2	1	0	4	1	7
Nigeria	3	2	1	0	3	0	7
Costa Rica	3	1	0	2	2	3	3
Scotland	3	0	0	3	2	7	0

Top two in each group and the four third-placed sides with the best record qualified for 2nd round

2nd round

July 11: Austria 2 Gambia 1; United States 2 Uruguay 1 (aet); Spain 4 Brazil 2 (aet); Japan 2 Czech Republic 2 (aet; Czech Republic 4-3 on pens).
July 12: Chile 1 Portugal 0; Zambia 1 Nigeria 2; Argentina 3 Poland 1; Mexico 3 Congo 0.

Quarter-finals

July 14: Austria 2 United States 1 (aet); Spain 1 Czech Republic 1 (aet; Czech Republic 4-3 on pens).
July 15: Chile 4 Nigeria 0 (aet); Argentina 1 Mexico 0.

Semi-finals

July 18 - Edmonton
Austria 0
Czech Republic 2 (Micola 4, Fenin 15)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
Austria: Zaglmair - Gramann, Prodl, Suttner, Harnik (Junuzovic 46), Kavlak, Hoffer, Hackmair, Simkovic (Okotie 59), Hinum, Rasswalder (Morgenthaler 79).
Czech Republic: Petr - Kuban, Mazuch, Simunek, Kudela, Fenin, Janda (Cihlar 81), Micola (Mares 72), Strestik (Pekhart 61), Suchy, Kalouda.

July 19 - Toronto
Chile 0
Argentina 3 (Di Maria 12, Yacob 65, Moralez 90)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
Chile: Toselli - Suarez, Godoy, Larrondo, Medel, Currimilla, Medina (Sanchez 76), Vidal, Cortes (Isla 59), Martinez, Vidangossy. *Sent off: Medel 15min, Currimilla 77min.*
Argentina: Romero - Fazio, Insua, Mercado, Banega (Cabral 85), Cahais, Yacob, Aguero, Moralez, Di Maria (Sanchez 51), Piatti (Acosta 80).

Third-place play-off

July 22 - Toronto
Austria 0
Chile 1 (Martinez 45)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Hansson (Swe)
Austria: Lukse - Prodl, Suttner, Stanislaw (Hoffer 75), Kavlak, Junuzovic, Hackmair, Madl, Hinum (Pirker 87), Okotie, Rasswalder (Harnik 62).
Sent off: Madl 68min.
Chile: Toselli - Suarez, Isla (Peralta 74), Godoy, Larrondo, Medina, Sepulveda, Vidal, Martinez, Vidangossy, Silva (Cortes 61).

Final

July 22 - Toronto
Czech Republic 1 (Fenin 60)
Argentina 2 (Aguero 62, Zarate 86)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Undiano Mallenco (Spa)
Czech Republic: Petr - Kuban, Mazuch, Simunek, Kudela, Fenin, Mares (Gecov 76), Micola, Strestik (Pekhart 83), Suchy, Kalouda.
Argentina: Romero - Fazio, Insua, Mercado, Banega, Sanchez, Zarate, Aguero, Sigali, Moralez (Cabral 90), Piatti (Acosta 80).

● *Under-20 World Cup squads are on pages 108-109*

EURO 2008 QUALIFIERS

Group A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Poland	9	6	1	2	15	7	19
Serbia	7	4	2	1	10	4	14
Portugal	7	4	2	1	15	5	14
Finland	8	4	2	2	9	5	14
Belgium	8	2	1	5	5	10	7
Armenia	7	2	1	4	3	7	7
Kazakhstan	8	1	3	4	5	11	6
Azerbaijan	8	1	2	5	4	17	5

Group B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	7	6	0	1	15	2	18
Italy	7	5	1	1	13	6	16
Scotland	7	5	0	2	13	6	15
Ukraine	6	4	0	2	8	6	12
Lithuania	7	2	1	4	4	7	7
Georgia	8	2	0	6	13	14	6
Faroe Islands	8	0	0	8	2	27	0

Group C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Greece	7	6	0	1	12	5	18
Bosnia-Herz	7	4	1	2	14	14	13
Turkey	6	4	1	1	16	6	13
Norway	7	4	1	2	17	6	13
Hungary	7	2	0	5	7	14	6
Malta	7	1	1	5	5	15	4
Moldova	7	0	2	5	4	15	2

Group D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	7	6	1	0	29	4	19
Czech Rep	7	4	2	1	15	4	14
Rep Ireland	7	4	1	2	12	8	13
Slovakia	7	3	0	4	16	13	9
Wales	6	2	1	3	8	9	7
Cyprus	6	1	1	4	9	16	4
San Marino	6	0	0	6	1	36	0

Group E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	7	5	2	0	16	4	17
Israel	8	5	2	1	17	7	17
Russia	7	4	3	0	11	1	15
England	7	4	2	1	12	2	14
Macedonia	7	2	1	4	6	7	7
Estonia	7	0	0	7	0	14	0
Andorra	7	0	0	7	1	28	0

Group F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sweden	7	6	0	1	17	4	18
Spain	7	5	0	2	13	6	15
N Ireland	6	4	1	1	10	7	13
Denmark	6	3	1	2	9	5	10
Liechtenstein	7	1	1	5	4	18	4
Iceland	7	1	1	5	5	15	4
Latvia	6	1	0	5	4	7	3

Group G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Romania	7	5	2	0	14	4	17
Bulgaria	7	4	3	0	11	4	15
Holland	6	4	2	0	8	2	14
Albania	7	2	3	2	8	6	9
Belarus	7	2	1	4	10	15	7
Slovenia	7	1	1	5	5	12	4
Luxembourg	7	0	0	7	1	14	0

Top two in each group qualify for finals. Austria and Switzerland qualify automatically as co-hosts

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALIFIERS

Group 1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	3	3	0	0	13	0	9
Gabon	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Madagascar	4	0	0	4	0	14	0

Group 2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	4	2	2	0	8	2	8
Botswana	5	2	1	2	3	6	7
Burundi	4	2	0	2	5	6	6
Mauritania	5	1	1	3	7	9	4

Group 3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	5	4	0	1	8	3	12
Uganda	5	2	2	1	5	2	8
Niger	5	1	1	3	4	8	4
Lesotho	5	1	1	3	3	7	4

Group 4

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tunisia	5	4	1	0	10	0	13
Sudan	5	4	0	1	10	2	12
Seychelles	5	1	0	4	2	13	3
Mauritius	5	0	1	4	2	9	1

Group 5

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cameroon	5	5	0	0	13	3	15
Eq Guinea	5	2	1	2	5	7	7
Liberia	5	1	1	3	6	9	4
Rwanda	5	1	0	4	6	11	3

Group 6

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Angola	5	4	1	0	15	3	13
Eritrea	5	2	2	1	5	8	8
Kenya	5	1	1	3	4	6	4
Swaziland	5	0	2	3	0	7	2

Group 7

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal	5	2	2	1	7	2	8
Tanzania	5	2	2	1	4	6	8
Mozambique	5	1	3	1	4	4	6
Burkina Faso	5	1	1	3	4	7	4

Group 8

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guinea	5	2	2	1	6	3	8
Algeria	5	2	2	1	5	4	8
Gambia	5	1	2	2	4	5	5
Cape Verde Is	5	1	2	2	3	6	5

Group 9

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mali	5	2	3	0	8	1	9
Togo	5	3	0	2	7	7	9
Benin	5	2	2	1	8	4	8
Sierra Leone	5	0	1	4	1	12	1

Group 10

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DR Congo	5	2	2	1	7	5	8
Libya	5	2	1	2	6	5	7
Namibia	5	2	1	2	6	6	7
Ethiopia	5	2	0	3	3	6	6

Group 11

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Africa	5	3	2	0	9	1	11
Zambia	5	2	2	1	6	2	8
Congo	5	1	3	1	4	5	6
Chad	5	0	1	4	2	13	1

Group 12

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Malawi	3	1	0	2	1	3	3
Zimbabwe	3	0	1	2	1	4	1

Group winners and the three best runners-up qualify for finals. Ghana qualify automatically as hosts

FRIENDLIES

Monday, June 25
June 25 - Doha
Qatar 1
Turkmenistan 0
HT: 0-0

Wednesday, June 27
June 27 - Petaling Jaya, Malaysia
Bahrain 2 (Jalal 7, John 88)
United Arab Emirates 2 (Al-Shehhi 35, Jaber 50)
HT: 1-1

Thursday, June 28
June 28 - Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia 0
Jamaica 2 (Harvey 44, Wolfe 45)
HT: 0-2

Friday, June 29
June 29 - Seogwipo
South Korea 3 (Yeom Ki-hun 50, Lee Chun-soo 79, Lee Keun-ho 86)
Iraq 0
HT: 0-0

Saturday, June 30
June 30 - Singapore
Singapore 0
Australia 3 (Viduka 52, 89, Kewell 77)
HT: 0-0
Australia: Schwarzer - Neill, Kisnorbo (Beauchamp 54), Culina, Emerton, Wilkshire (Thwaite 87), Grella, Holman (Thompson 68), Sterjovski (Carle 77), Bresciano (Kewell 61), Viduka (Burns 90).

**June 30 - Bangkok*
Thailand 1 (Therdsak 44)
Qatar 1 (Jassim 32)
HT: 1-1
**Match abandoned after 45 minutes because of a waterlogged pitch*

June 30 - Hanoi
Vietnam 5 (Le Cong Vinh 11, 17, Mai Tien Thanh 53, Phan Thanh Binh 77, Nguyen Anh Duc 87)
Bahrain 3 (Abdulrahman 3, Hubail 62, John 72)
HT: 2-1

Sunday, July 1
July 1 - Singapore
United Arab Emirates 1 (Jaber 52)
North Korea 0
HT: 0-0

Monday, July 2
July 2 - Tehran
Iran 8 (Nekounam 1, 17, Madanchi 2, 48, Hashemian 38, Khatibi 82, 88, Enayati 90)
Jamaica 1 (F Taylor 84)
HT: 4-0

July 2 - Paju, South Korea
Iraq 0
Uzbekistan 2 (Ibragimov 3, Bakaev 30)
HT: 0-2

July 2 - Bangkok
Thailand 2 (Tawan 8, Sutee 69)
Qatar 0
HT: 1-0

Wednesday, July 4
July 4 - Singapore
North Korea 1 (Park Nam-chol 84)
Saudi Arabia 1 (Maaz 64)
HT: 0-0

Thursday, July 5
July 5 - Seoul
South Korea 2 (Cho Jae-jin 5, 19)
Uzbekistan 1 (Djeparov pen 59)
HT: 2-0

Friday, July 6
July 6 - Blantyre
Malawi 1 (Kafoteka 48)
Namibia 2 (Katjatenja 23, Bester 65)
HT: 0-1

Friday, July 13
July 13 - Honiara
Solomon Islands 2 (Iniga, Maemae)
Papua New Guinea 1 (Davani)
HT: 1-0

Tuesday, July 17
July 17 - Noumea
New Caledonia 5 (Mapou 40, Toto 47, 62, Hmae 56, Wajoka pen 69)
Vanuatu 3 (Gete 34, Masauvakalo 83, Soromon 90)
HT: 1-1

Thursday, July 19
July 19 - Noumea
New Caledonia 0
Vanuatu 2 (Naprapol 7, Mermer 19)
HT: 0-2

Saturday, July 21
July 21 - Orapa
Botswana 0
Zambia 0
Botswana 3-2 on pens

SINGAPORE TOURNAMENT

June 24
Singapore 2 (Mohammad 40, Daud 76)
North Korea 1 (An Chol-hyok 59)
HT: 1-0

June 27
Singapore 1 (Shariff 90)
Saudi Arabia 2 (Al-Qahtani 26, Al-Jassam 34)
HT: 0-2

June 28
Oman 2 (Mubarak 48, Al-Ajmi 52)
North Korea 2 (Kang Jin-hyok 20, An Chol-hyok pen 45)
HT: 0-2
Oman 4-3 on pens

July 1
Oman 1 (Bashir 56)
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al-Shihoub 55)
HT: 0-0
Oman 3-1 on pens

SINGAPORE TOURNAMENT – FINAL

	P	W	D+	D-	L	F	A	Pts
Saudi Arabia	2	1	0	1	0	3	2	4
Oman	2	0	2	0	0	3	3	4
Singapore	2	1	0	0	1	3	3	3
North Korea	2	0	0	1	1	3	4	1

Teams drawing then winning on penalties (D+) received two points; those drawing then losing on penalties (D-) received one point

CLUB FOOTBALL EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st qualifying round

1st legs - July 17/18; 2nd legs - July 24/25
APOEL (Cyp) v BATE Borisov (Bls)
2-0, 0-3 (aet) (agg 2-3)
Derry City (Ire) v Pyunik (Arm)
0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2)
Domzale (Sln) v SK Tirana (Alb)
1-0, 2-1 (agg 3-1)
F91 Dudelange (Lux) v Zilina (Slk)
1-2, 4-5 (agg 5-7)
FH (Ice) v HB (Far)
4-1, 0-0 (agg 4-1)
Khazar Lenkoran (Aze) v Dinamo Zagreb (Cro)
1-1, 1-3 (aet) (agg 2-4)
Linfield (NI) v Elfsborg (Swe)
0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
Marsaxlokk (Mlt) v Sarajevo (Bos)
0-6, 1-3 (agg 1-9)
Murata (SaM) v Tampere United (Fin)
1-2, 0-2 (agg 1-4)
Olimpi Rustavi (Geo) v Astana (Kaz)
0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Pobeda (Mac) v Levadia Tallinn (Est)
0-1, 0-0 (agg 0-1)
Sheriff (Mol) v Ranger's (And)
2-0, 3-0 (agg 5-0)
The New Saints (Wal) v Ventspils (Lat)
3-2, 1-2 (agg 4-4; Ventspils on away goals)
Zeta (Mne) v FBK Kaunas (Lit)
3-1, 2-3 (agg 5-4)

INTERTOTO CUP

1st round

1st legs - June 23; 2nd legs - July 1
Ethnikos Achnas (Cyp) v Makedonija (Mac)
1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2)
FK Baku (Aze) v Dacia Chisinau (Mol)
1-1, 2-4 (agg 3-5)
Birkirkara (Mlt) v Maribor (Sln)
0-3, 1-2 (agg 1-5)
Cliftonville (NI) v Dinaburg (Lat)
1-1, 1-0 (agg 2-1)
Differdange (Lux) v Slovan Bratislava (Slk)
0-2, 0-3 (agg 0-5)
Gloria Bistrita (Rom) v Grbalj (Mne)
2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2)
Hammarby (Swe) v Ki (Far)
1-0, 2-1 (agg 3-1)
Honka (Fin) v TVMK (Est)
0-0, 4-2 (agg 4-2)
Sant Julia (And) v Slavija (Bos)
2-3, 2-3 (agg 4-6)
Shakhtyor (Bls) v Ararat (Arm)
4-1, 0-2 (agg 4-3)
Tobol (Kaz) v Zestaponi (Geo)
3-0, 0-2 (agg 3-2)
Valur (Ice) v Cork City (Ire)
0-2, 1-0 (agg 1-2)
Vetra (Lit) v Llanelli (Wal)
3-1, 3-5 (agg 6-6; Vetra on away goals)
Zagreb (Cro) v Vllaznia (Alb)
2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2; Vllaznia on away goals)

2nd round

1st legs - July 7; 2nd legs - July 14/15
Chomomorets (Ukr) v Shakhtyor
4-2, 2-0 (agg 6-2)
Cork City v Hammarby
1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)
Dacia Chisinau v St Gallen (Swi)
0-1, 5-0 (agg 5-1)
Gent (Blg) v Cliftonville
2-0, 4-0 (agg 6-0)
Honka v AaB (Den)
2-2, 1-1 (agg 3-3; AaB on away goals)
Maccabi Haifa (Isr) v Gloria Bistrita
0-2, 4-3 (agg 4-5)
Makedonija v Cherno More (Bul)
0-4, 0-3 (agg 0-7)
Maribor v Hajduk Kula (Ser)
2-0, 0-5 (agg 2-5)
Rapid Wien (Aut) v Slovan Bratislava
3-1, 0-1 (agg 3-2)
Slavija v Otelul Galati (Rom)
0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Tobol v Slovan Liberec (Cze)
1-1, 2-0 (agg 3-1)
Trabzonspor (Tur) v Vllaznia
6-0, 4-0 (agg 10-0)
*Vetra v Legia Warsaw (Pol)
3-0
Zalaegerszeg (Hun) v Rubin Kazan (Rus)
0-3, 0-2 (agg 0-5)

**1st leg abandoned at half-time because of Legia fans' hooliganism with the score at 2-0; Vetra were awarded a 3-0 win and Legia expelled from the competition*

AUSTRIA

July 10: LASK Linz 1 Austria Karnten* 0.
July 11: Rapid Wien 3 Wacker Innsbruck** 1; Sturm Graz 2 Austria Wien 2; SV Ried 1 Mattersburg 2; Salzburg 4 Altach 1.
July 14: Austria Wien 1 LASK Linz 1; Altach 2 SV Ried 3; Wacker Innsbruck 0 Sturm Graz 0.
July 15: Austria Karnten 1 Salzburg 0.
July 20: Sturm Graz 4 LASK Linz 0.
July 22: Austria Karnten 0 SV Ried 3; Austria Wien 2 Salzburg 2; Wacker Innsbruck 2 Mattersburg 2.
July 25: Mattersburg 3 Rapid Wien 2.

**Formerly Pasching*
***Formerly Wacker Tirol*

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mattersburg	3	2	1	0	7	5	7
SV Ried	3	2	0	1	7	4	6
Sturm Graz	3	1	2	0	6	2	5
Salzburg	3	1	1	1	6	4	4
LASK Linz	3	1	1	1	2	5	4
Rapid Wien	2	1	0	1	5	4	3
Austria Wien	3	0	3	0	5	5	3
A Karnten	3	1	0	2	1	4	3
Wacker	3	0	2	1	3	5	2
Altach	2	0	0	2	3	7	0

CROATIA

July 20: Inter 0 Rijeka 1.
July 21: Dinamo 5 Sibenik 0; Medimurje 0 Zagreb 3; Cibalia 1 Varteks 0.
July 22: Osijek 1 Slaven 0; Zadar 0 Hajduk 0.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	1	1	0	0	5	0	3
Zagreb	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Cibalia	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Osijek	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Rijeka	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Hajduk	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Zadar	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Inter	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Slaven	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Varteks	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Medimurje	1	0	0	1	0	3	0
Sibenik	1	0	0	1	0	5	0

DENMARK

July 18: AGF 1 Horsens 2; Randers 2 Viborg 0; Nordsjaelland 1 FC Copenhagen 0; Esbjerg 1 Brondby 0.
July 21: Brondby 2 Nordsjaelland 2.
July 22: Lyngby 0 Randers 3; Viborg 0 Esbjerg 5; AGF 0 OB 2.
July 23: Horsens 2 Midtjylland 1.
July 25: OB 1 Lyngby 1; AaB 1 FC Copenhagen 1.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Esbjerg	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
Randers	2	2	0	0	5	0	6
Horsens	2	2	0	0	4	2	6
OB	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Nordsjaelland	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
AaB	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Brondby	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Copenhagen	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Lyngby	2	0	1	1	1	4	1
Midtjylland	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
AGF	2	0	0	2	1	4	0
Viborg	2	0	0	2	0	7	0

HUNGARY

July 20: Zalaegerszeg 3 Paks 1; Vasas 3 Tatabanya 1.
July 21: Siofok 2 Ujpest 4; Kaposvar 1 Sopron 1.
July 22: Diosgyor 1 Debrecen 2; Rakospalota 0 Honved 3.
July 23: MTK 2 Fehervar 0.

HUNGARY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Honved	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Ujpest	1	1	0	0	4	2	3
Vasas	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Zalaegerszeg	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
MTK	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Debrecen	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Kaposvar	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Sopron	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Gyor	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nyiregyhaza	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Diosgyor	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Siofok	1	0	0	1	2	4	0
Paks	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Tatabanya	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Fehervar	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Rakospalota	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

NORWAY

June 30: Valerenga 1 Viking 3.
July 1: Start 0 Lyn 1; Stabaek 3 Stromsgodset 2; Sandefjord 0 Lillestrom 2; Fredrikstad 1 Odd Grenland 1; Brann 2 Tromso 1.
July 2: Rosenborg 2 Aalesund 2.
July 21: Sandefjord 3 Lyn 1.
July 22: Odd Grenland 0 Stromsgodset 1; Brann 3 Stabaek 0; Fredrikstad 0 Lillestrom 0; Start 1 Aalesund 2; Rosenborg 4 Viking 2.
July 23: Valerenga 2 Tromso 2.

NORWAY	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brann	14	9	2	3	28	23	29
Stabaek	14	8	4	2	22	16	28
Lillestrom	14	7	4	3	22	12	25
Viking	14	7	3	4	25	21	24
Rosenborg	14	6	4	4	28	21	22
Lyn	14	6	3	5	27	22	21
Stromsgodset	14	6	3	5	18	21	21
Fredrikstad	14	4	6	4	21	21	18
Tromso	14	5	2	7	22	24	17
Aalesund	14	4	3	7	19	27	15
Valerenga	14	3	5	6	11	16	14
Start	14	3	4	7	18	24	13
Sandefjord	14	3	3	8	15	25	12
Odd Grenland	14	3	2	9	15	18	11

RUSSIA

June 30: Saturn 2 Amkar 0; Lokomotiv 5 Kryliya Sovetov 2; Spartak Nalchik 2 Luch-Energiya 0.
July 1: FC Moscow 1 Zenit 2; CSKA 0 Kuban 0; Khimki 1 Tom 1; Rubin 2 Dinamo 1; Rostov 1 Spartak Moscow 3.
July 14: CSKA 0 Dinamo 1; Kuban 1 Khimki 1; Luch-Energiya 2 Saturn 1; Amkar 0 Spartak Moscow 1.
July 15: Kryliya Sovetov 1 Spartak Nalchik 2; Tom 1 FC Moscow 2; Zenit 2 Rostov 0.
July 19: Khimki 1 Lokomotiv 2.
July 20: Dinamo 0 Amkar 0.
July 21: Spartak Moscow 3 Zenit 1; Rostov 1 Luch-Energiya 1; Saturn 0 Tom 0; FC Moscow 3 Kryliya Sovetov 1.
July 22: Spartak Nalchik 1 Kuban 0; Lokomotiv 1 CSKA 2.
July 25: Rubin 3 Lokomotiv 0; FC Moscow 3 Saturn 2.

RUSSIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spartak M	17	9	5	3	23	16	32
FC Moscow	17	8	6	3	21	14	30
Zenit	17	8	6	3	27	22	30
Dinamo	17	7	5	5	21	15	26
CSKA	17	6	7	4	20	16	25
Rubin	16	7	2	7	18	16	23
Lokomotiv	18	6	5	7	21	25	23
Kryliya S'tov	17	6	4	7	19	21	22
Spartak N	17	5	6	6	15	18	21
Luch-Energiya	17	5	5	7	16	18	20
Tom	17	4	8	5	20	19	20
Amkar	17	4	8	5	15	15	20
Khimki	17	4	7	6	18	18	19
Saturn	17	3	9	5	16	19	18
Kuban	17	3	9	5	13	18	18
Rostov	17	1	8	8	12	25	11

SWEDEN

July 1: Brommapojkarna 1 GAIS 0.
July 2: Kalmar 2 Orebro 0; IFK Gothenburg 1 Malmo 2; Djurgardens 2 Gefle 1.
July 3: AIK 2 Trelleborgs 0; Halmstads 3 Elfsborg 0.
July 4: Helsingborgs 4 Hammarby 2.
July 7: Djurgardens 1 Malmo 0.
July 8: Orebro 0 Halmstads 3.
July 9: GAIS 3 Trelleborgs 1; Gefle 1 Brommapojkarna 1; AIK 0 Elfsborg 1.
July 10: IFK Gothenburg 0 Helsingborgs 0.
July 11: Kalmar 2 Hammarby 0.
July 12: Elfsborg 2 AIK 0.
July 14: Trelleborgs 0 GAIS 1.
July 15: Helsingborgs 2 IFK Gothenburg 2.
July 16: Brommapojkarna 2 Gefle 1; Halmstads 3 Orebro 1.
July 17: Malmo 1 Djurgardens 1.
July 18: Hammarby 1 Kalmar 0.
July 21: Djurgardens 2 Elfsborg 1.
July 23: Brommapojkarna 0 Trelleborgs 3; Helsingborgs 2 AIK 3.

SWEDEN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Elfsborg	16	8	4	4	23	16	28
Halmstads	14	8	3	3	22	14	27
Djurgardens	15	8	3	4	21	13	27
Kalmar	14	8	1	5	21	13	25
Hammarby	14	6	3	5	20	14	21
Malmo	14	5	5	4	17	13	20
IFK Goth'burg	14	5	4	5	21	19	19
Helsingborgs	15	5	4	6	23	22	19
GAIS	14	5	4	5	13	14	19
AIK	15	5	4	6	14	18	19
Gefle	14	4	5	5	14	16	17
Trelleborgs	16	4	2	10	17	29	14
Bromm'karna	15	3	4	8	12	28	13
Orebro	14	2	6	6	12	21	12

SWITZERLAND

July 18: Grasshopper 2 St Gallen 0.
July 21: Lucerne 1 Neuchatel Xamax 1.
July 22: Basle 1 Zurich 0; Aarau 1 Young Boys 1.
July 25: Young Boys 3 Grasshopper 2; Sion 3 Aarau 0; St Gallen 0 Basle 3.
July 26: Neuchatel Xamax 1 Thun 1; Zurich 4 Lucerne 1.

SWITZERLAND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Basle	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Young Boys	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Sion	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Zurich	2	1	0	1	4	2	3
Grasshopper	2	1	0	1	4	3	3
Neuchatel X	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Thun	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Lucerne	2	0	1	1	2	5	1
Aarau	2	0	1	1	1	4	1
St Gallen	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

UKRAINE

July 13: Metalurh Z 1 Karpaty 0.
July 14: Zakarpattya 1 Tavriya 0; Vorskla 1 Zorya 1; Metalist 2 Naftovyk 0; Dnipro 2 Kryvbas 0.
July 15: Arsenal 1 Metalurh D 3; Shakhtar 1 Dynamo 1.
July 18: Chornomorets 0 FC Kharkiv 1.
July 20: Tavriya 2 Karpaty 1.
July 21: Zorya 3 Metalist 2; Naftovyk 0 Shakhtar 3; Kryvbas 0 Metalurh Z 1; FC Kharkiv 1 Dnipro 2.
July 22: Zakarpattya 0 Vorskla 0; Dynamo 2 Arsenal 2.
July 25: Metalurh D 0 Chornomorets 0.

UKRAINE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dnipro	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Metalurh Z	2	2	0	0	2	0	6
Shakhtar	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Metalurh D	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Zorya	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Zakarpattya	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Metalist	2	1	0	1	4	3	3
FC Kharkiv	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Tavriya	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Dynamo	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
Vorskla	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Chornomorets	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Arsenal	2	0	1	1	3	5	1
Karpaty	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Kryvbas	2	0	0	2	0	3	0
Naftovyk	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

SOUTH AMERICA

BOLIVIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

July 22: The Strongest 2 Aurora 2; Jorge Wilstermann 1 Bolivar 3; Real Potosi 0 La Paz 1; Oriente 1 Real Mamore 0; San Jose 4 Universitario 0.
July 25: Destroyers 0 Blooming 1.

BOLIVIA – CLOSING – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
San Jose	1	1	0	0	4	0	3
Blooming	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Aurora	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
The Strongest	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Destroyers	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Universitario	1	0	0	1	0	4	0

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bolivar	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
La Paz	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Oriente	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Real Mamore	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Real Potosi	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
J Wilstermann	1	0	0	1	1	3	0

BRAZIL

June 30: Corinthians 0 Palmeiras 1; Parana 2 Atletico Paranaense 2; America 0 Goias 3; Fluminense 1 Botafogo 2; Cruzeiro 3 Vasco da Gama 1; Santos 0 Gremio 0; Internacional 1 Atletico Mineiro 1.
July 4: Palmeiras 2 America 0; Atletico Paranaense 1 Nautico 1; Goias 1 Botafogo 1; Fluminense 0 Parana 0; Sao Paulo 1 Internacional 0; Figueirense 2 Cruzeiro 1; Gremio 3 Juventude 1.
July 5: Sport Recife 2 Corinthians 1; Atletico Mineiro 1 Flamengo 1; Vasco da Gama 4 Santos 0.
July 6: Parana 0 America 1.
July 7: Corinthians 1 Fluminense 1; Goias 3 Sport Recife 2; Botafogo 2 Atletico Paranaense 0; Nautico 0 Palmeiras 1; Atletico Mineiro 0 Gremio 1; Santos 4 Cruzeiro 1; Juventude 2 Vasco da Gama 0; Internacional 2 Figueirense 1; Sao Paulo 0 Flamengo 0.
July 12: Parana 1 Figueirense 2; Juventude 1 Nautico 1; Vasco da Gama 1 Atletico Paranaense 0.
July 14: Corinthians 1 Sao Paulo 1; America 1 Internacional 2; Sport Recife 2 Atletico Mineiro 0; Cruzeiro 2 Goias 1; Santos 3 Botafogo 0; Gremio 1 Palmeiras 1.
July 19: Atletico Paranaense 4 Juventude 0; Nautico 1 Cruzeiro 4; Atletico Mineiro 4 America 1; Sao Paulo 0 Fluminense 1; Figueirense 0 Sport Recife 1; Internacional 3 Corinthians 0.
July 20: Palmeiras 2 Santos 2; Goias 0 Gremio 0; Flamengo 1 Parana 2.
July 21: America 2 Atletico Paranaense 1; Juventude 2 Internacional 0; Vasco da Gama 4 Atletico Mineiro 0.
July 22: Corinthians 0 Nautico 3; Parana 1 Palmeiras 0; Fluminense 3 Goias 0; Sport Recife 3 Botafogo 3; Cruzeiro 1 Sao Paulo 2; Santos 3 Figueirense 1; Gremio 1 Flamengo 0.
July 26: Palmeiras 3 Vasco da Gama 2; Atletico Paranaense 2 Cruzeiro 2; Goias 1 Santos 0; Nautico 0 Gremio 2; Figueirense 2 Corinthians 2; Internacional 1 Parana 0; Flamengo 3 America 1; Botafogo 3 Juventude 1.

BRAZIL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Botafogo	13	8	4	1	29	16	28
Gremio	14	7	3	4	13	14	24
Goias	14	7	2	5	22	17	23
Sao Paulo	13	6	4	3	11	5	22
Parana	14	6	4	4	20	16	22
Palmeiras	14	6	4	4	19	18	22
Vasco	13	6	2	5	23	18	20
Cruzeiro	14	6	2	6	30	28	20
Internacional	14	6	2	6	17	18	20
Fluminense	12	5	5	2	17	9	20
Sport Recife	13	5	3	5	23	21	18
Santos	14	5	3	6	19	20	18
Figueirense	14	5	3	6	21	24	18
At Paranaense	14	4	5	5	22	20	17
At Mineiro	13	4	4	5	17	19	16
Corinthians	13	3	6	4	12	15	15
Juventude	13	4	2	7	16	22	14
Flamengo	11	2	5	4	16	20	11
America	14	3	1	10	12	27	10
Nautico	14	2	4	8	16	28	10

CHILE

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

July 21: Palestino 2 Lota Schwager 2; Nublense 2 Puerto Montt 1; Univ de Concepcion 1 Univ de Chile 1; O'Higgins 2 Everton 0; Dep La Serena 2 Union Espanola 1.
July 22: Santiago Wanderers 1 Univ Catolica 0; Audax Italiano 2 Cobresal 1; Huachipato 2 Coquimbo Unido 1; Antofagasta 2 Cobreloa 0.
July 24: Colo Colo 4 Dep Melipilla 1.

CHILE – CLOSING – GROUP 1	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colo Colo	1	1	0	0	4	1	3
Dep La Serena	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
S Wanderers	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Palestino	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Cobresal	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

GROUP 2	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
U Concepcion	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
D Concepcion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
U Espanola	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Univ Catolica	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Dep Melipilla	1	0	0	1	1	4	0

GROUP 3	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Audax Italiano	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Univ de Chile	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Puerto Montt	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Cobreloa	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Everton	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

GROUP 4	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Antofagasta	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
O'Higgins	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Huachipato	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Nublense	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
L Schwager	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Coquimbo U	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

COLOMBIA

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

July 22: Bucaramanga 0 Pereira 1; Once Caldas 1 Cucuta 0; Dep Pasto 1 Indep Medellin 0; At Junior 2 Indep Santa Fe 1; At Nacional 0 La Equidad 0; America 1 Chico 2.
July 23: Millonarios 1 Real Cartagena 0; Tolima 3 At Huila 0.

COLOMBIA – CLOSING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tolima	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
At Junior	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Chico	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Dep Pasto	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Millonarios	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Once Caldas	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Pereira	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
At Nacional	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
La Equidad	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Dep Cali	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Quindio	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
America	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Indep Santa Fe	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Bucaramanga	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Cucuta	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Indep Medellin	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Cartagena	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
At Huila	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

ECUADOR

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

July 13: Dep Cuenca 2 Dep Quito 3; Emelec 3 Macara 0.
July 15: El Nacional 2 Barcelona 1; Imbabura 2 Dep Azogues 2; Olmedo 1 LDU Quito 0.
July 18: Dep Quito 2 Emelec 0; Dep Azogues 2 El Nacional 3.
July 19: Macara 1 Imbabura 0; LDU Quito 2 Dep Cuenca 1; Barcelona 2 Olmedo 0.
July 22: Dep Quito 1 LDU Quito 0; El Nacional 2 Imbabura 0; Olmedo 0 Macara 0; Dep Cuenca 0 Barcelona 2.
July 23: Emelec 2 Dep Azogues 0.
July 25: Barcelona 1 Dep Quito 0; Dep Azogues 1 Olmedo 0; Imbabura 1 Emelec 1.
July 26: Macara 1 Dep Cuenca 1; LDU Quito 2 El Nacional 1.

ECUADOR – CLOSING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Barcelona	4	3	0	1	6	2	9
El Nacional	4	3	0	1	8	5	9
Dep Quito	4	3	0	1	6	3	9
Emelec	4	2	1	1	6	3	7
LDU Quito	4	2	0	2	4	4	6
Macara	4	1	2	1	2	4	5
Dep Azogues	4	1	1	2	5	7	4
Olmedo	4	1	1	2	1	3	4
Imbabura	4	0	2	2	3	6	2
Dep Cuenca	4	0	1	3	4	8	1

PARAGUAY

OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP

June 29: 2 de Mayo 3 Guarani 3.
June 30: Nacional 1 Tacuary 2.
July 1: Sportivo Luqueno 1 Sol de America 2; 3 de Febrero 0 Sportivo Trinidense 1; Cerro Porteno 0 Olimpia 0; Libertad 3 12 de Octubre 1.
July 6: Olimpia 0 Sportivo Luqueno 0.
July 7: Guarani 2 Cerro Porteno 4; 12 de Octubre 4 3 de Febrero 2; Sportivo Trinidense 1 2 de Mayo 0; Sol de America 0 Nacional 0; Tacuary 2 Libertad 1.

PARAGUAY – OPENING - FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
S Luqueno	22	14	5	3	45	22	47
Cerro Porteno	22	13	4	5	42	18	43
Libertad	22	11	7	4	30	16	40
Olimpia	22	10	8	4	29	21	38
3 de Febrero	22	8	6	8	23	25	30
Nacional	22	6	8	8	25	23	26
Tacuary	22	7	5	10	20	32	26
S Trinidense	22	6	6	10	24	39	24
Sol de America	22	5	8	9	19	29	23
12 de Octubre	22	6	5	11	27	38	23
2 de Mayo	22	4	9	9	24	32	21
Guarani	22	3	7	12	26	39	16

PERU

CLOSING CHAMPIONSHIP

July 21: Sporting Cristal 2 Total Clean 2; Coronel Bolognesi 1 Dep Municipal 0.
July 22: Melgar 0 Alianza Atletico 0; Universidad SMP 2 Sport Ancash 1; Cienciano 2 Universitario 3.
July 23: Alianza Lima 1 Sport Boys 2.

PERU – CLOSING	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Universitario	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Sport Boys	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Univ SMP	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
C Bolognesi	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
S Cristal	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Total Clean	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Al Atletico	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Melgar	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Cienciano	1	0	0	1	2	3	0
Al Lima	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Sport Ancash	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Dep Municipal	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

CENTRAL & NORTH AMERICA

UNITED STATES

June 30: Chivas USA 2 New England Revolution 0; Columbus Crew 1 New York Red Bulls 0; FC Dallas 0 Houston Dynamo 0.
July 1: Kansas City Wizards 1 Toronto FC 1; Chicago Fire 0 Colorado Rapids 0.
July 4: Kansas City Wizards 0 DC United 1; Los Angeles Galaxy 2 Chicago Fire 0; Real Salt Lake 1 Toronto FC 2; Colorado Rapids 0 Columbus Crew 0; FC Dallas 2 Chivas USA 0.
July 5: Houston Dynamo 4 New York Red Bulls 0.
July 7: Los Angeles Galaxy 2 Kansas City Wizards 2; Chicago Fire 1 Toronto FC 1; Columbus Crew 2 Real Salt Lake 0; New England Revolution 1 Chivas USA 1.
July 8: Houston Dynamo 1 DC United 0; Colorado Rapids 0 New York Red Bulls 1.
July 12: Chicago Fire 0 Houston Dynamo 4.
July 14: Chivas USA 2 Columbus Crew 1; Kansas City Wizards 1 Real Salt Lake 0; New York Red Bulls 0 New England Revolution 1; DC United 3 FC Dallas 3.
July 15: Houston Dynamo 0 Toronto FC 0.
July 22: Kansas City Wizards 2 Colorado Rapids 2; Columbus Crew 2 Toronto FC 0; New York Red Bulls 1 DC United 0; New England Revolution 3 Houston Dynamo 3.
July 26: New York Red Bulls 0 Chivas USA 2.

UNITED STATES – EASTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New England	16	7	6	3	29	20	27
New York	18	8	3	7	26	23	27
Kansas City	17	7	5	5	29	24	26
Columbus	18	6	7	5	23	23	25
DC United	16	7	3	6	26	22	24
Toronto FC	17	5	4	8	18	26	19
Chicago Fire	16	4	4	8	13	26	16

WESTERN CONFERENCE	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Houston	19	10	4	5	28	13	34
FC Dallas	18	9	3	6	24	24	30
Chivas USA	16	8	3	5	22	16	27
Colorado	18	4	6	8	16	24	18
LA Galaxy	12	3	4	5	17	18	13
Real Salt Lake	15	1	6	8	12	24	9

LEADING GOALSCORERS

12 Eddie Johnson (Kansas City Wizards)
10 Luciano Emilio (DC United)
9 Juan Pablo Angel (New York Red Bulls)
8 Taylor Twellman (New England Revolution)

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

July 6: JS Kabylie (Alg) 2 FAR Rabat (Mor) 0.
July 7: Etoile Sahel (Tun) 0 Al Ittihad (Lby) 0.
July 21: Etoile Sahel 3 JS Kabylie 0; FAR Rabat 1 Al Ittihad 0.

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Etoile Sahel	3	2	1	0	4	0	7
Al Ittihad	3	1	1	1	1	1	4
JS Kabylie	3	1	0	2	2	4	3
FAR Rabat	3	1	0	2	1	3	3

Group B

July 8: ASEC Abidjan (IvC) 0 Al Ahly (Egy) 1; Al Hilal (Sud) 2 Esperance (Tun) 0.
July 20: Al Ahly 3 Esperance 0.
July 22: Al Hilal 2 ASEC Abidjan 1.

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Al Ahly	3	3	0	0	6	0	9
Al Hilal	3	2	0	1	4	3	6
ASEC Abidjan	3	0	1	2	1	3	1
Esperance	3	0	1	2	0	5	1

Top two in each group qualify for semi-finals

CONFEDERATION CUP

Group A

July 21: Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf) 3 TP Mazembe (DRC) 2; Astres (Cam) 1 CS Sfaxien (Tun) 1.

GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
M Sundowns	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Astres	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
CS Sfaxien	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
TP Mazembe	1	0	0	1	2	3	0

Group B

July 22: Dolphin (Nig) 2 Kwara United (Nig) 0; Ismaili (Egy) 1 Al Merreikh (Sud) 1.

GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dolphin	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Al Merreikh	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Ismaili	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Kwara United	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

GHANA

GHANA – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hearts of Oak	30	16	10	4	33	15	58
Ashanti Gold	30	15	8	7	35	24	53
Asante Kotoko	30	15	6	9	35	24	51
Heart of Lions	30	13	8	9	40	27	47
Arsenal*	30	14	4	12	37	36	43
Real Sportive	30	11	10	9	22	22	43
Great Olympics	30	12	6	12	35	34	42
Liberty Pros	30	10	10	10	27	25	40
Youth	30	9	13	8	23	23	40
Hasaacas	30	11	5	14	29	37	38
Tamale Utd	30	8	12	10	23	23	36
G All Blacks	30	9	9	12	22	29	36
King F Babies*	30	9	10	11	27	31	34
Tano B'kwa**	30	9	8	13	24	29	32
Feyenoord	30	9	5	16	24	32	32
Power FC*	30	5	6	19	26	51	18

**3pts deducted for fielding ineligible players*
***3pts deducted for playing in wrong strip*

ASIA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Quarter-finals draw

Al Wahda (UAE) v Al Hilal (Sau)
Sepahan (Irn) v Kawasaki Frontale (Jap)
Songnam Ilhwa (SKo) v Al Karama (Syr)
Urawa Reds (Jap) v Chonbuk Motors (SKo)

1st legs - September 19; 2nd legs - September 26

AFC CUP

Quarter-finals draw

Mahindra United (Ind) v Al Nijmeh (Leb)
Shabab Al Ordun (Jor) v Armed Forces (Sin)
Sun Hei (HK) v Al Wihdat (Jor)
Tampines Rovers (Sin) v Al Faisaly (Jor)

1st legs - September 18; 2nd legs - September 25

CHINA

CHINA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shandong	13	8	2	3	29	14	26
Changchun	13	8	2	3	21	13	26
Shanghai	14	7	3	4	18	16	24
Wuhan	13	6	4	3	18	12	22
Tianjin	13	7	1	5	15	11	22
Dalian	13	6	4	3	14	12	22
Qingdao	13	6	2	5	20	17	20
Beijing	13	4	7	2	13	8	19
Liaoning	13	6	1	6	13	18	18
Shenyang	13	4	4	5	10	13	16
Shenzhen	13	3	4	6	9	14	13
Zhejiang	13	3	3	7	14	22	12
Xiamen	13	2	4	7	12	20	10
Henan	13	1	6	6	6	13	9
Xian	13	1	5	7	7	16	8

IRAN

IRAN – FINAL	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saipa	30	15	11	4	45	31	56
Esteghlal A	30	16	6	8	33	28	54
Pirouzi	30	14	11	5	49	33	53
Esteghlal T	30	14	10	6	39	30	52
Sepahan	30	14	7	9	41	28	49
AbooMoslem	30	11	10	9	40	36	43
Peykan	30	11	8	11	37	42	41
Zob-Ahan	30	10	9	11	39	42	39
Mes	30	8	12	10	35	39	36
Fajr-Sepasi	30	7	13	10	29	32	34
Paas*	30	7	13	10	36	36	33
Bargh	30	8	9	13	35	45	33
Saba Batry	30	7	11	12	28	31	32
Malavan	30	7	11	12	21	30	32
Foolad	30	5	13	12	24	33	28
Rah-Ahan	30	2	14	14	30	45	20

**1pt deducted for fielding too many foreign players in round 20 game*

JAPAN

June 30: Nagoya Grampus Eight 1 Ventforet Kofu 1; Yokohama FC 0 JEF United 1; Kashima Antlers 1 FC Tokyo 2; Omiya Ardija 0 Gamba Osaka 3; Kashiwa Reysol 1 Shimizu S-Pulse 3; Albirex Niigata 2 Sanfrecce Hiroshima 1; Kawasaki Frontale 2 Vissel Kobe 1; Jubilo Iwata 0 Urawa Reds 2; Oita Trinita 0 Yokohama F Marinos 3.

JAPAN	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gamba Osaka	18	12	5	1	41	17	41
Urawa Reds	17	10	6	1	27	13	36
Albirex Niigata	18	9	5	4	30	26	32
Kashima	18	8	6	4	26	18	30
Kawasaki	18	7	7	4	32	23	28
Shimizu S-P	18	8	4	6	25	20	28
Jubilo Iwata	18	9	1	8	30	31	28
Yokohama FM	18	7	5	6	25	16	26
Kashiwa	18	7	5	6	24	17	26
Grampus Eight	18	7	2	9	23	22	23
Vissel Kobe	18	6	5	7	27	28	23
FC Tokyo	18	7	2	9	23	30	23
Sanfrecce	17	6	4	7	27	34	22
JEF United	18	5	4	9	22	28	19
Ventforet	18	5	3	10	22	35	18
Omiya Ardija	18	3	7	8	10	19	16
Oita Trinita	18	4	4	10	18	33	16
Yokohama FC	18	3	1	14	13	35	10

SOUTH KOREA

SOUTH KOREA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Songnam	13	9	4	0	24	6	31
Suwon	13	7	4	2	20	12	25
Ulsan	13	6	4	3	18	14	22
Gyeongnam	13	6	3	4	23	16	21
Chonbuk	13	6	2	5	19	15	20
Chunnam	13	4	7	2	13	11	19
Pohang	13	4	5	4	11	11	17
Seoul	13	3	8	2	7	7	17
Jeju	13	4	2	7	10	15	14
Daejeon	13	2	7	4	12	14	13
Incheon	13	3	4	6	14	18	13
Daegu	13	3	4	6	15	22	13
Busan	13	2	4	7	11	20	10
Gwangju	13	1	4	8	7	23	7

SQUADS: COPA AMERICA

ARGENTINA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Roberto ABBONDANZIERI (Getafe, Spa)
12 Juan CARRIZO (River Plate)
22 Agustin ORION (San Lorenzo)

DEFENDERS
2 Roberto AYALA (Valencia, Spa)
17 Nicolas BURDISSO (Internazionale, Ita)
3 Daniel DIAZ (Boca Juniors)
6 Gabriel HEINZE (Manchester United, Eng)
4 Hugo IBARRA (Boca Juniors)
15 Gabriel MILITO (Zaragoza, Spa)
8 Javier ZANETTI (Internazionale, Ita)

MIDFIELDERS
16 Pablo AIMAR (Zaragoza, Spa)
19 Esteban CAMBIASSO (Internazionale, Ita)
5 Fernando GAGO (Real Madrid, Spa)
13 Luis GONZALEZ (FC Porto, Por)
14 Javier MASCHERANO (Liverpool, Eng)
10 Juan Roman RIQUELME (Boca Juniors)
20 Juan Sebastian VERON (Estudiantes)

FORWARDS
9 Hernan CRESPO (Internazionale, Ita)
18 Lionel MESSI (Barcelona, Spa)
21 Diego MILITO (Zaragoza, Spa)
7 Rodrigo PALACIO (Boca Juniors)
11 Carlos TEVEZ (West Ham, Eng)

COACH: Alfio BASILE

BOLIVIA

GOALKEEPERS
12 Sergio GALARZA (Oriente Petrolero)
1 Hugo SUAREZ (Jorge Wilstermann)

DEFENDERS
4 Lorgio ALVAREZ (Cerro Porteno, Par)
14 Miguel Angel HOYOS (The Strongest)
3 Limbert MENDEZ (Jorge Wilstermann)
2 Juan Manuel PENA (Villarreal, Spa)
16 Ronald RALDES (Rosario Central, Arg)
13 Edemir RODRIGUEZ (Real Potosi)

MIDFIELDERS
21 Jhasmany CAMPOS (Oriente Petrolero)
6 Ronald GARCIA (Aris Salonika, Gre)
20 Sacha LIMA (Jorge Wilstermann)
8 Gualberto MOJICA (Pacos Ferreira, Por)
15 Jorge ORTIZ (Blooming)
22 Darwin PENA (Real Potosi)
5 Leonel REYES (Bolivar)
10 Joselito VACA (Blooming)

FORWARDS
19 Augusto ANDAVERIS (La Paz)
17 Juan Carlos ARCE (Corinthians, Bra)
11 Diego CABRERA (Aurora)
18 Gonzalo GALINDO (The Strongest)
9 Jaime MORENO (DC United, USA)
7 Nelson SOSSA (Jorge Wilstermann)

COACH: Erwin SANCHEZ

BRAZIL

GOALKEEPERS
12 DONI (Roma, Ita)
1 HELTON (FC Porto, Por)

DEFENDERS
3 ALEX Costa (PSV Eindhoven, Hol)
14 ALEX SILVA (Sao Paulo)
13 DANIEL ALVES (Sevilla, Spa)
6 GILBERTO (Hertha Berlin, Ger)
4 JUAN (Bayer Leverkusen, Ger)
16 KLEBER (Santos)
2 MAICON (Internazionale, Ita)
15 NALDO (Werder Bremen, Ger)

MIDFIELDERS
20 ANDERSON (FC Porto, Por)
10 DIEGO (Werder Bremen, Ger)
7 ELANO (Shakhtar Donetsk, Ukr)
18 FERNANDO (Bordeaux, Fra)
8 GILBERTO SILVA (Arsenal, Eng)
17 JOSUE (Sao Paulo)
19 JULIO BAPTISTA (Arsenal, Eng)
5 MINEIRO (Hertha Berlin, Ger)

FORWARDS
21 AFONSO ALVES (Heerenveen, Hol)
22 FRED (Lyon, Fra)
11 ROBINHO (Real Madrid, Spa)
9 VAGNER LOVE (CSKA Moscow, Rus)

COACH: DUNGA

CHILE

GOALKEEPERS
1 Claudio BRAVO (Real Sociedad, Spa)
12 Nicolas PERIC (Audax Italiano)

DEFENDERS
15 Pablo CONTRERAS (Celta Vigo, Spa)
4 Ismael FUENTES (Jaguares, Mex)
19 Gonzalo JARA (Colo Colo)
18 Rodrigo MELENDEZ (Colo Colo)
2 Alvaro ORMENO (Gimnasia y Esgrima LP, Arg)
5 Miguel RIFFO (Colo Colo)
3 Sebastian ROCO (Santiago Wanderers)
13 Jorge VARGAS (Salzburg, Aut)

MIDFIELDERS
6 Jose CABION (Deportes Melipilla)
14 Matias FERNANDEZ (Villarreal, Spa)
11 Mark GONZALEZ (Liverpool, Eng)
16 Manuel ITURRA (Universidad de Chile)
17 Arturo SANHUEZA (Colo Colo)
7 Rodrigo TELLO (Besiktas, Tur)
10 Jorge VALDIVIA (Palmeiras, Bra)
21 Carlos VILLANUEVA (Audax Italiano)

FORWARDS
20 Gonzalo FIERRO (Colo Colo)
22 Juan LORCA (Colo Colo)
9 Reinaldo NAVIA (Atlas, Mex)
8 Humberto SUAZO (Colo Colo)

COACH: Nelson ACOSTA

COLOMBIA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Miguel CALERO (Pachuca, Mex)
12 Robinson ZAPATA (Cucuta)

DEFENDERS
5 Javier ARIZALA (Tolima)
16 Jair BENITEZ (Deportivo Cali)
2 Ivan CORDOBA (Internazionale, Ita)
13 Vladimir MARIN (Libertad, Par)
14 Luis PEREA (Atletico Madrid, Spa)
4 Gerardo VALLEJO (Tolima)
3 Mario YEPES (Paris Saint-Germain, Fra)

MIDFIELDERS
21 Jorge BANGUERO (America)
17 Jaime CASTRILLON (Independiente Medellin)
9 Alvaro DOMINGUEZ (Deportivo Cali)
8 David FERREIRA (Atletico Paranaense, Bra)
20 Macnelly TORRES (Cucuta)
6 Fabian VARGAS (Internacional, Bra)
15 Jhon VIAFARA (Southampton, Eng)
22 Juan Camilo ZUNIGA (Atletico Nacional)

FORWARDS
10 Andres CHITIVA (Pachuca, Mex)
7 Edixon PEREA (Bordeaux, Fra)
18 Luis Gabriel REY (Morelia, Mex)
11 Hugo RODALLEGA (Monterrey, Mex)
19 Cesar VALOYES (Independiente Medellin)

COACH: Jorge Luis PINTO

ECUADOR

GOALKEEPERS
1 Marcelo ELIZAGA (Emelec)
12 Cristhian MORA (LDU Quito)

DEFENDERS
15 Oscar BAGUI (Olmedo)
13 Renan CALLE (LDU Quito)
4 Ulises DE LA CRUZ (Reading, Eng)
17 Giovanny ESPINOZA (Vitesse Arnhem, Hol)
2 Jorge GUAGUA (Colon Santa Fe, Arg)
3 Ivan HURTADO (Atletico Nacional, Col)
18 Neicer REASCO (Sao Paulo, Bra)

MIDFIELDERS
19 Walter AYOVI (El Nacional)
14 Segundo CASTILLO (Red Star Belgrade, Ser)
8 Edison MENDEZ (PSV Eindhoven, Hol)
6 Pedro QUINONEZ (El Nacional)
7 David QUIROZ (El Nacional)
20 Edwin TENORIO (LDU Quito)
5 Patricio URRUTIA (LDU Quito)
16 Luis Antonio VALENCIA (Wigan, Eng)

FORWARDS
11 Christian BENITEZ (El Nacional)
9 Felix BORJA (Olympiakos, Gre)
10 Felipe CAICEDO (Basle, Swi)
22 Pablo David PALACIOS (Deportivo Quito)
21 Carlos TENORIO (Al Sadd, Qat)

COACH: Luis Fernando SUAREZ

MEXICO

GOALKEEPERS
13 Guillermo OCHOA (America)
1 Oswaldo SANCHEZ (Santos Laguna)

DEFENDERS
5 Israel CASTRO (Pumas UNAM)
15 Jose Antonio CASTRO (America)
16 Jaime LOZANO (Tigres)
2 Jonny MAGALLON (Guadalajara)
4 Rafael MARQUEZ (Barcelona, Spa)
3 Fausto PINTO (Pachuca)
22 Francisco RODRIGUEZ (Guadalajara)

MIDFIELDERS
20 Fernando ARCE (Morelia)
8 Jaime CORREA (Pachuca)
18 Andres GUARDADO (Atlas)
11 Ramon MORALES (Guadalajara)
14 Gonzalo PINEDA (Guadalajara)
6 Gerardo TORRADO (Cruz Azul)

FORWARDS
17 Adolfo BAUTISTA (Jaguares)
10 Cuauhtemoc BLANCO (Chicago Fire, USA)
19 Omar BRAVO (Guadalajara)
12 Juan Carlos CACHO (Pachuca)
21 Nery CASTILLO (Olympiakos, Gre)
9 Luis Angel LANDIN (Morelia)
7 Alberto MEDINA (Guadalajara)

COACH: Hugo SANCHEZ

PARAGUAY

GOALKEEPERS
2 Aldo BOBADILLA (Boca Juniors, Arg)
1 Justo VILLAR (Newell's Old Boys, Arg)
3 Joel ZAYAS (Bolivar, Bol)

DEFENDERS
6 Julio Cesar CACERES (Tigres, Mex)
4 Paulo DA SILVA (Toluca, Mex)
8 Julio MANZUR (Guarani)
5 Claudio MOREL (Boca Juniors, Arg)
7 Dario VERON (Pumas UNAM, Mex)

MIDFIELDERS
15 Edgar BARRETO (NEC Nijmegen, Hol)
9 Carlos BONET (Libertad)
17 Julio DOS SANTOS (Bayern Munich, Ger)
11 Edgar GONZALEZ (Cerro Porteno)
12 Cristian RIVEROS (Libertad)
16 Domingo SALCEDO (Cerro Porteno)
14 Jonathan SANTANA (Wolfsburg, Ger)
13 Aureliano TORRES (San Lorenzo, Arg)
10 Enrique VERA (LDU Quito, Ecu)

FORWARDS
18 Salvador CABANAS (America, Mex)
21 Oscar CARDOZO (Newell's Old Boys, Arg)
22 Nelson CUEVAS (America, Mex)
19 Dante LOPEZ (Crotone, Ita)
20 Roque SANTA CRUZ (Bayern Munich, Ger)

COACH: Gerardo MARTINO

PERU

GOALKEEPERS
1 Leao BUTRON (Universidad SMP)
21 Juan FLORES (Cienciano)
12 George FORSYTH (Alianza Lima)

DEFENDERS
3 Santiago ACASIETE (Almeria, Spa)
22 John GALLIQUIO (Universitario)
6 Jhoel HERRERA (Alianza Lima)
5 Alberto RODRIGUEZ (Sporting Braga, Por)
4 Walter VILCHEZ (Cruz Azul, Mex)
2 Miguel VILLALTA (Sporting Cristal)

MIDFIELDERS
8 Juan Carlos BAZALAR (Cienciano)
7 Jair CESPEDES (Sport Boys)
13 Paolo DE LA HAZA (Cienciano)
18 Pedro GARCIA (Universidad SMP)
19 Damian ISMODES (Sporting Cristal)
10 Juan Carlos MARINO (Cienciano)
15 Edgar VILLAMARIN (Cienciano)

FORWARDS
17 Jefferson FARFAN (PSV Eindhoven, Hol)
9 Paolo GUERRERO (Hamburg, Ger)
20 Roberto JIMENEZ (San Lorenzo, Arg)
16 Andres MENDOZA (Metalurh Donetsk, Ukr)
14 Claudio PIZARRO (Chelsea, Eng)
11 Ysrael ZUNIGA (Melgar)

COACH: Julio Cesar URIBE

UNITED STATES

GOALKEEPERS
23 Brad GUZAN (Chivas USA)
18 Kasey KELLER (Monchengladbach, Ger)

DEFENDERS
13 Jonathan BORNSTEIN (Chivas USA)
4 Bobby BOSWELL (DC United)
7 Danny CALIFF (AaB Aalborg, Den)
12 Jimmy CONRAD (Kansas City Wizards)
3 Jay DeMERIT (Watford, Eng)
15 Drew MOOR (FC Dallas)
6 Heath PEARCE (Nordsjaelland, Den)
2 Marvell WYNNE (Toronto FC, Can)

MIDFIELDERS
17 Kyle BECKERMAN (Colorado Rapids)
19 Ricardo CLARK (Houston Dynamo)
5 Benny FEILHABER (Hamburg, Ger)
11 Eddie GAVEN (Columbus Crew)
16 Sacha KLJESTAN (Chivas USA)
21 Justin MAPP (Chicago Fire)
25 Lee NGUYEN (PSV Eindhoven, Hol)
14 Ben OLSEN (DC United)

FORWARDS
10 Charlie DAVIES (Hammarby, Swe)
8 Herculez GOMEZ (Colorado Rapids)
9 Eddie JOHNSON (Kansas City Wizards)
20 Taylor TWELLMAN (New England Revolution)

COACH: Bob BRADLEY

URUGUAY

GOALKEEPERS
1 Fabian CARINI (Internazionale, Ita)
12 Juan CASTILLO (Penarol)

DEFENDERS
14 Carlos DIOGO (Zaragoza, Spa)
4 Jorge FUCILE (FC Porto, Por)
8 Diego GODIN (Nacional)
2 Diego LUGANO (Fenerbahce, Tur)
6 Dario RODRIGUEZ (Schalke, Ger)
19 Andres SCOTTI (Argentinos Juniors, Arg)
17 Carlos VALDEZ (Treviso, Ita)

MIDFIELDERS
18 Fabian CANOBBIO (Celta Vigo, Spa)
5 Pablo GARCIA (Celta Vigo, Spa)
3 Walter GARGANO (Danubio)
20 Ignacio GONZALEZ (Danubio)
16 Maximiliano PEREIRA (Defensor Sporting)
15 Diego PEREZ (Monaco, Fra)
7 Cristian RODRIGUEZ (Paris Saint-Germain, Fra)
22 Vicente SANCHEZ (Toluca, Mex)

FORWARDS
13 Sebastian ABREU (Tigres, Mex)
11 Fabian ESTOYANOFF (Deportivo La Coruna, Spa)
21 Diego FORLAN (Villarreal, Spa)
10 Alvaro RECOBA (Internazionale, Ita)
9 Gonzalo VARGAS (Monaco, Fra)

COACH: Oscar Washington TABAREZ

VENEZUELA

GOALKEEPERS
12 Javier TOYO (Caracas)
1 Renny VEGA (Carabobo)

DEFENDERS
6 Alejandro CICHERO (Litex Lovech, Bul)
20 Hector GONZALEZ (AEK Larnaca, Cyp)
3 Jose Manuel REY (AEK Larnaca, Cyp)
17 Jorge ROJAS (America, Col)
21 Andres ROUGA (Caracas)
2 Luis VALLENILLA (UA Maracaibo)
13 Leonel VIELMA (Caracas)
4 Oswaldo VIZCARRONDO (Caracas)

MIDFIELDERS
22 Pedro FERNANDEZ (UA Maracaibo)
10 Cesar GONZALEZ (Caracas)
14 Alejandro GUERRA (Caracas)
5 Miguel MEA VITALI (UA Maracaibo)
11 Ricardo PAEZ (Mineros de Guayana)
16 Edder PEREZ (Maritimo, Por)
8 Luis VERA (Caracas)

FORWARDS
18 Juan ARANGO (Mallorca, Spa)
19 Daniel ARISMENDI (UA Maracaibo)
15 Fernando DE ORNELAS (Odd Grenland, Nor)
9 Giancarlo MALDONADO (O'Higgins, Chi)
7 Jose TORREALBA (Mamelodi Sundowns, SAf)

COACH: Richard PAEZ

SQUADS: UNDER-20 WORLD CUP

ARGENTINA

GOALKEEPERS
21 Bruno CENTENO (San Lorenzo)
12 Javier GARCIA (Boca Juniors)
1 Sergio ROMERO (Racing Club)

DEFENDERS
6 Matias CAHAIS (Boca Juniors)
2 Federico FAZIO (Sevilla, Spa)
3 Emiliano INSUA (Liverpool, Eng)
4 Gabriel MERCADO (Racing Club)
14 Leonardo SIGALI (Nueva Chicago)
13 German VOBORIL (San Lorenzo)

MIDFIELDERS
5 Ever BANEGA (Boca Juniors)
15 Alejandro CABRAL (Velez Sarsfield)
11 Damian ESCUDERO (Velez Sarsfield)
16 Alejandro GOMEZ (Arsenal)
17 Maximiliano MORALEZ (Racing Club)
8 Matias SANCHEZ (Racing Club)
7 Claudio YACOB (Racing Club)

FORWARDS
20 Lautaro ACOSTA (Lanus)
10 Sergio AGUERO (Atletico Madrid, Spa)
18 Angel DI MARIA (Rosario Central)
19 Pablo PIATTI (Estudiantes)
9 Mauro ZARATE (Velez Sarsfield)

COACH: Hugo TOCALLI

AUSTRIA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Bartolomej KURIU (Austria Wien)
12 Andreas LUKSE (Rapid Wien)
21 Michael ZAGLMAIR (LASK Linz)

DEFENDERS
3 Daniel GRAMANN (TSV Hartberg)
15 Michael MADL (Austria Wien)
2 Thomas PANNY (Admira)
13 Thomas PIRKER (Austria Karnten)
4 Sebastian PRODL (Sturm Graz)
5 Markus SUTTNER (Austria Wien)

MIDFIELDERS
11 Peter HACKMAIR (SV Ried)
7 Martin HARNIK (Werder Bremen, Ger)
18 Thomas HINUM (Schwanenstadt)
10 Zlatko JUNUZOVIC (Austria Karnten)
8 Veli KAVLAK (Rapid Wien)
14 Bernhard MORGENTHALER (Admira)
20 Siegfried RASSWALDER (Leoben)
17 Tomas SIMKOVIC (Austria Wien)
6 Michael STANISLAW (Schwanenstadt)

FORWARDS
16 Ingo ENZENBERGER (Salzburg)
9 Erwin HOFFER (Rapid Wien)
19 Rubin OKOTIE (Austria Wien)

COACH: Paul GLUDOVATZ

BRAZIL

GOALKEEPERS
1 CASSIO (Gremio)
21 FELIPE (Santos)
12 MURIEL (Internacional)

DEFENDERS
13 AMARAL (Palmeiras)
16 CARLAO (Coritiba)
14 DAVID (Palmeiras)
4 DAVID MARINHO (Benfica, Por)
15 EDSON (Figueirense)
2 EDUARDO (Corinthians)
3 LUIZAO (Cruzeiro)
6 MARCELO (Real Madrid, Spa)

MIDFIELDERS
18 CARLOS EDUARDO (Gremio)
17 JI PARANA (Internacional)
20 LEANDRO LIMA (Sao Caetano)
8 MARCONE (Bahia)
10 RENATO AUGUSTO (Flamengo)
5 ROBERTO (Atletico Paranaense)
7 WILLIAN (Corinthians)

FORWARDS
11 ALEXANDRE PATO (Internacional)
9 JO (CSKA Moscow, Rus)
19 LUIZ ADRIANO (Shakhtar Donetsk, Ukr)

COACH: Nelson RODRIGUES

CANADA

GOALKEEPERS
1 Asmir BEGOVIC (Portsmouth, Eng)
21 Zach KALTHOFF (no club)
20 David MONSALVE (no club)

DEFENDERS
2 Nana ATTAKORA-GYAN (Toronto FC)
4 David EDGAR (Newcastle, Eng)
17 Gabriel GALA (Toronto FC)
5 Marcus HABER (Groningen, Hol)
12 Olivier LACOSTE-LEBUIS (Strasbourg, Fra)
13 Stephen LUMLEY (Toronto FC)
3 Kent O'CONNOR (1860 Munich, Ger)
18 Kennedy OWUSU-ANSAH (Hertha Berlin, Ger)

MIDFIELDERS
8 Keegan AYRE (Hibernian, Sco)
6 Jonathan BEAULIEU-BOURGAULT (St Pauli, Ger)
19 Michael D'AGOSTINO (Univ. of Kentucky, USA)
10 Will JOHNSON (Heerenveen, Hol)
15 Cristian NUNEZ (Toronto FC)
7 Jaime PETERS (Ipswich, Eng)

FORWARDS
16 Alex ELLIOTT (University of Portland, USA)
11 Simeon JACKSON (Rushden & Diamonds, Eng)
9 Andrea LOMBARDO (Toronto FC)
14 Tosaint RICKETTS (Univ. of Wisconsin, USA)

COACH: Dale MITCHELL

CHILE

GOALKEEPERS
1 Cristopher TOSELLI (Universidad Catolica)
21 Ronald VALLADARES (Fernandez Vial)
12 Nery VELOSO (Huachipato)

DEFENDERS
4 Eric GODOY (Santiago Wanderers)
5 Nicolas LARRONDO (Universidad de Chile)
17 Hans MARTINEZ (Universidad Catolica)
13 Christian SEPULVEDA (Union Espanola)
2 Cristian SUAREZ (Union San Felipe)
14 Arturo VIDAL (Bayer Leverkusen, Ger)

MIDFIELDERS
10 Juan ARENAS (Colo Colo)
15 Carlos CARMONA (Coquimbo Unido)
16 Gerardo CORTES (Deportes Concepcion)
8 Dagoberto CURRIMILLA (Huachipato)
3 Mauricio ISLA (Universidad Catolica)
6 Gary MEDEL (Universidad Catolica)
20 Isaias PERALTA (Union Espanola)

FORWARDS
11 Jaime GRONDONA (Santiago Wanderers)
9 Nicolas MEDINA (Universidad de Chile)
7 Alexis SANCHEZ (Udinese, Ita)
19 Michael SILVA (Atlante, Mex)
18 Mathias VIDANGOSSY (Villarreal, Spa)

COACH: Jose SULANTAY

CONGO

GOALKEEPERS
16 Rufin DIAMPAMBA (ACNFF)
1 Destin ONKA (ACNFF)
21 Gildas TOUFILANA (ACNFF)

DEFENDERS
3 Yan AHOUNGOU (ACNFF)
2 Yann KOMBO (ACNFF)
14 Jacques LOPARIMI (ACNFF)
6 Oxence MBANI (Auxerre, Fra)
17 Murhyen MERECK (ACNFF)
15 Mimille OKIELE (Cara)
4 Jules ONDJOLA (Auxerre, Fra)

MIDFIELDERS
10 Cecil FILANCKEMBO (Auxerre, Fra)
19 Bovid ITOUA (ACNFF)
7 Prestone LAKOLO (ACNFF)
8 Delvin NDINGA (Auxerre, Fra)
18 Saide NKOUNGA (ACNFF)

FORWARDS
11 Franchel IBARA (Etoile du Congo)
5 Gracia IKOUMA (ACNFF)
20 Ulrich KAPOLONGO (ACNFF)
9 Ermejea NGAKOSSO (ACNFF)
12 Fabrice NGUESSI (La Mancha)
13 Harris TCHILIMBOU (ACNFF)

COACH: Eddie HUDANSKI (Fra)

COSTA RICA

GOALKEEPERS
18 Esteban ALVARADO (Saprissa)
21 Francisco GOMEZ (Alajuelense)
1 Alfonso QUESADA (Cadiz, Spa)

DEFENDERS
3 Rudy DAWSON (Alajuelense)
7 Pablo HERRERA (Alajuelense)
2 Brayan JIMENEZ (Saprissa)
17 Dave MYRIE (Cadiz, Spa)
16 Leslie RAMOS (Alajuelense)
20 Kendall WASTON (Saprissa)

MIDFIELDERS
8 Celso BORGES (Saprissa)
6 Jose CUBERO (Herediano)
19 Ricardo GARCIA (Puntarenas)
15 Orlando GONZALEZ (Carmelita)
10 Luis PEREZ (Perez Zeledon)
5 Esteban RODRIGUEZ (Alajuelense)

FORWARDS
13 Marlon CAMBLE (Herediano)
9 Cesar ELIZONDO (Saprissa)
14 Argenis FERNANDEZ (Santos)
4 Giancarlo GONZALEZ (Alajuelense)
12 Jonathan McDONALD (Herediano)
11 Jean SOLORZANO (Alajuelense)

COACH: Geovanni ALFARO

CZECH REPUBLIC

GOALKEEPERS
16 Ludek FRYDRYCH (Hradec Kralove)
21 Tomas FRYSTAK (Slovacko)
1 Radek PETR (Banik Ostrava)

DEFENDERS
20 Tomas CIHLAR (Jihlava)
2 Jakub DOHNALEK (Slovan Liberec)
8 Michal HELD (Slavia Prague)
3 Lukas KUBAN (Slovacko)
4 Ondrej MAZUCH (Brno)
5 Jan SIMUNEK (Sparta Prague)
17 Marek SUCHY (Slavia Prague)

MIDFIELDERS
14 Marcel GECOV (Kladno)
12 Petr JANDA (Slavia Prague)
19 Lubos KALOUDA (Brno)
6 Ondrej KUDELA (Slovacko)
10 Jakub MARES (Usti nad Labem)
13 Tomas MICOLA (Banik Ostrava)
11 Tomas OKLESTEK (Brno)
7 Jiri VALENTA (Jablonec)

FORWARDS
9 Martin FENIN (Teplice)
18 Tomas PEKHART (Tottenham, Eng)
15 Marek STRESTIK (Brno)

COACH: Miroslav SOUKUP

GAMBIA

GOALKEEPERS
16 Christopher ALLEN (Gamtel)
21 Suruwa BOJANG (Steve Biko)
1 Joseph GOMEZ (Wallidan)

DEFENDERS
6 Mandou BOJANG (Gambia Ports Authority)
18 Abdou CEESAY (Baksu United)
2 Pierre GOMEZ (Banjul Hawks)
5 Ken JAMMEH (Banjul Hawks)
19 Ebrima JATTA (Banjul Hawks)
3 Furmus MENDY (Gambia Ports Authority)
4 Alagie NGUM (Gamtel)

MIDFIELDERS
10 Pa Landing CONATEH (Real de Banjul)
15 Tijan JAITEH (Brann, Nor)
8 Paul JATTA (Banjul Hawks)
12 Abdoulie MANSALLY (Real de Banjul)
14 Sainey NYASSI (Gambia Ports Authority)
17 Sanna NYASSI (Gambia Ports Authority)
11 Ebrima SOHNA (Wallidan)

FORWARDS
7 Kebba BAH (Wallidan)
9 Pa Modou JAGNE (Gambia Ports Authority)
13 Ousman JALLOW (Raja Casablanca, Mor)
20 Modou NGUM (Wallidan)

COACH: Peter JOHNSON

JAPAN

GOALKEEPERS
1 Akihiro HAYASHI (Ryutsu Keizai University)
21 Kazushige KIRIHATA (Kashiwa Reysol)
18 Yohei TAKEDA (Shimizu S-Pulse)

DEFENDERS
4 Yohei FUKUMOTO (Oita Trinita)
20 Shinji KAGAWA (Cerezo Osaka)
5 Tomoaki MAKINO (Sanfrecce Hiroshima)
17 Kosuke OTA (Yokohama FC)
2 Atsuto UCHIDA (Kashima Antlers)
13 Masaki YANAGAWA (Vissel Kobe)
3 Michihiro YASUDA (Gamba Osaka)

MIDFIELDERS
15 Jun AOYAMA (Nagoya Grampus Eight)
16 Seiya FUJITA (Consadole Sapporo)
19 Ryuichi HIRASHIGE (Sanfrecce Hiroshima)
10 Yosuke KASHIWAGI (Sanfrecce Hiroshima)
6 Masato MORISHIGE (Oita Trinita)
8 Atomu TANAKA (Albirex Niigata)
7 Tsukasa UMESAKI (Oita Trinita)

FORWARDS
14 Kota AOKI (JEF United)
11 Mike HAVENAAR (Yokohama F Marinos)
9 Kazuhisa KAWAHARA (Albirex Niigata)
12 Yasuhito MORISHIMA (Cerezo Osaka)

COACH: Yasushi YOSHIDA

JORDAN

GOALKEEPERS
12 Mohammad ABU KHOUSA (Al Baqaa)
1 Hamad AL-ASMAR (Al Jazeera)
2 Salah MSAD (Al Yarmouk)

DEFENDERS
13 Mohammad AL-BASHA (Al Jazeera)
21 Tariq AL-JUMAH (Al Arabi)
16 Mohammad ALDMEIRI (Al Wahdat)
6 Anas BANI YASEEN (Al Arabi)
15 Adnan HASAN (Al Baqaa)
3 Ibrahim ZAWAHREH (Al Faisaly)

MIDFIELDERS
20 Ala AL-BASHIR (Al Ramthaa)
5 Khaled AL-KATATSHEH (Al Faisaly)
17 Mohammad ALAWNEH (Al Hussein)
14 Raed FRAEH (Al Jazeera)
11 Anas HIJAH (Al Faisaly)
4 Mohammad QATAWNEH (Al Faisaly)
8 Abdallah SALIM (Al Wahdat)
7 Baha SULEIMAN (Al Faisaly)

FORWARDS
19 Loly AL-ZAIDEH (Al Jazeera)
10 Ahmad NOFAL (Al Ahli)
18 Abdallah SALAH (Al Wahdat)
9 Mohammed SHISHANI (Al Ahli)

COACH: Jan POULSEN (Den)

MEXICO

GOALKEEPERS
1 Alfonso BLANCO (Pachuca)
12 Rodolfo COTA (Pachuca)
21 Alejandro GALLARDO (Atlas)

DEFENDERS
2 Patricio ARAUJO (Guadalajara)
20 Alejandro CASTRO (Cruz Azul)
13 Julio Cesar DOMINGUEZ (Cruz Azul)
3 Efrain JUAREZ (Barbate, Spa)
4 Arturo LEDESMA (Guadalajara)
14 Osmar MARES (Santos Laguna)
5 Hector MORENO (Pumas UNAM)

MIDFIELDERS
16 Adrian ALDRETE (Morelia)
6 Omar ESPARZA (Guadalajara)
11 Javier HERNANDEZ (Guadalajara)
7 Jorge HERNANDEZ (Atlas)
15 Juan Carlos SILVA (America)
18 Cesar VILLALUZ (Cruz Azul)

FORWARDS
8 Pablo BARRERA (Pumas UNAM)
19 Christian BERMUDEZ (Atlante)
10 Giovanni DOS SANTOS (Barcelona, Spa)
17 Jose GUERRERO (Atlante)
9 Carlos VELA (Salamanca, Spa)

COACH: Jesus RAMIREZ

NEW ZEALAND

GOALKEEPERS
16 Rod BROWN (Wellington)
20 Rhyss KEANE (Manly United, Aus)
1 Jacob SPOONLEY (East Coast Bays)

DEFENDERS
14 Michael BOXALL (Auckland City)
6 Phil EDGINTON (Hawkes Bay United)
3 Ian HOGG (Hawkes Bay United)
5 Jack PELTER (Canterbury United)
2 Sam PETERS (Wellington)
19 Kieran PURCELL (University of Evansville, USA)
17 Tim SCHAEFFERS (Waikato)

MIDFIELDERS
21 Aaron CLAPHAM (University of Louisville, USA)
13 Michael CUNNINGHAM (Otago United)
8 Chris JAMES (Fulham, Eng)
15 Dan KEAT (Dartmouth College, USA)
4 Cole PEVERLEY (Waikato)
18 Tim RICHARDSON (Manawatu)
12 Nick ROYDHOUSE (Manawatu)

FORWARDS
10 Jeremy BROCKIE (Richmond City)
9 Greg DRAPER (Canterbury United)
7 Craig HENDERSON (Dartmouth College, USA)
11 Sam JENKINS (Hawkes Bay United)

COACH: Stu JACOBS

NIGERIA

GOALKEEPERS
21 Ikechukwu EZENWA (Ocean Boys)
12 Moses OCHEJE (Lobi Stars)
1 Olufemi THOMAS (Nasara United)

DEFENDERS
6 Efe AMBROSE (Kaduna United)
5 Adeniyi AYODEJI (Gateway)
3 Uwa ECHIEJILE (Insurance)
16 Robert EGBETA (Sunshine Stars)
18 Nazifi INUWA (Kano Pillars)
17 Akeem LATIFU (Bussdor United)
4 Oladapo OLUFEMI (Anderlecht, Bel)
19 Kingsley SALAMI (Cardiff, Wal)
2 Suraj SODIQ (Prime)

MIDFIELDERS
20 Moses ADAMS (Westerlo, Bel)
14 Chukwuma AKABUEZE (Kwara United)
13 Blessing OKARDI (Ocean Boys)
10 Solomon OWELLO (Niger Tornadoes)
9 Nduka OZOKWO (Enugu Rangers)

FORWARDS
11 Akeem AGBETU (Kolding, Den)
8 Ezekiel BALA (Lyn, Nor)
15 Brown IDEYE (Ocean Boys)
7 Bello KOFARMATA (Kano Pillars)

COACH: Ladan BOSSO

NORTH KOREA

GOALKEEPERS
1 JU Kwang-min (Kigwancha)
21 RI Kwang-il (Sobaeksu)
3 RI Phyong-chol (Kim Il-sung University)

DEFENDERS
14 JON Kwang-ik (Amrokgang)
4 MUN Kyong-nam (Amrokgang)
5 PAK Nam-chol (Amrokgang)
16 RI Kwang-hyok (Kyonggongop)
2 RI Yong-chol (April 25 Sports Group)
6 YUN Myong-song (Rimyongsu)
15 YUN Yong-il (Wolmido)

MIDFIELDERS
12 KIM Kuk-jin (Pyongyang)
19 KIM Kyong-il (Rimyongsu)
9 PAK Song-chol (Rimyongsu)
8 RI Chol-myong (Pyongyang)
13 RYOM Nam-il (April 25 Sports Group)

FORWARDS
20 JONG Chol-min (Rimyongsu)
10 KIM Chang-hyok (Pyongyang)
7 KIM Kum-il (April 25 Sports Group)
17 PAK Chol-min (Rimyongsu)
11 RI Hung-ryong (Kim Il-sung University)

COACH: JO Tong-sop

PANAMA

GOALKEEPERS
21 Alexander ANDREVE (Chorrillo)
1 Luis MEJIA (Tauro)
12 Guillermo MURILLO (Chepo)

DEFENDERS
16 Eduardo DASENT (Tauro)
17 Antonio LESLIE (Deportivo Arabe Unido)
5 Marvin MITCHELL (Deportivo Arabe Unido)
20 Carlos RODRIGUEZ (Chepo)
2 Eric VASQUEZ (Chorrillo)
14 Christian VERGARA (Chorrillo)

MIDFIELDERS
10 Nelson BARAHONA (Deportivo Arabe Unido)
4 Josue BROWN (Atletico Veraguense)
6 Francisco CASTANEDA (Tauro)
7 Javier GONZALEZ (Alianza)
13 Pablo GONZALEZ (Sporting 89)
8 Luis JARAMILLO (Chepo)
3 Luis OVALLE (Sporting 89)
19 Celso POLO (Chepo)
18 Alberto QUINTERO (Chorrillo)

FORWARDS
11 Armando COOPER (Deportivo Arabe Unido)
15 Javier DE LA ROSA (Chepo)
9 Gabriel TORRES (Chepo)

COACH: Julio DELY

POLAND

GOALKEEPERS
1 Bartosz BIALKOWSKI (Southampton, Eng)
21 Wojciech SZCZESNY (Arsenal, Eng)
12 Przemyslaw TYTON (Gornik Leczna)

DEFENDERS
15 Maciej DABROWSKI (Victoria Koronowo)
6 Adam DANCH (Gornik Zabrze)
3 Jaroslaw FOJUT (Bolton, Eng)
16 Grzegorz KRYCHOWIAK (Bordeaux, Fra)
7 Adrian MAREK (Zagleble Sosnowiec)
13 Damian RACZKA (Monchengladbach, Ger)
2 Ben STAROSTA (Sheffield United, Eng)
5 Krysztof STRUGAREK (LKS Lomza)
14 Jakub SZALEK (KP Police)

MIDFIELDERS
20 Tomasz CYWKA (Wigan, Eng)
17 Jakub FETER (Balucz)
8 Artur MARCINIAK (GKS Belchatow)
18 Mariusz SACHA (Podbeskidzie Bielsko-Biala)

FORWARDS
19 Pawel ADAMIEC (Zdroj Ciechocinek)
11 Dawid JANCZYK (Legia Warsaw)
10 Lukasz JANOSZKA (Ruch Chorzow)
4 Krzysztof KROL (Real Madrid, Spa)
9 Patryk MALECKI (Wisla Krakow)

COACH: Michal GLOBISZ

PORTUGAL

GOALKEEPERS
1 IGOR ARAUJO (Covilha)
21 RICARDO JANOTA (Atletico)
12 RUI PATRICIO (Sporting Lisbon)

DEFENDERS
5 ANDRE MARQUES (Olivais e Moscavide)
13 ANTUNES (Pacos Ferreira)
14 JOAO PEDRO (Portimonense)
18 MANO (Belenenses)
4 PAULO RENATO (Real Massama)
2 PEDRO CORREIA (Benfica)
3 STEVEN VITORIA (Tourizense)

MIDFIELDERS
20 BRUNO PEREIRINHA (Sporting Lisbon)
17 FELICIANO CONDESSO (Villarreal, Spa)
6 NUNO COELHO (Portimonense)
8 PELE (Vitoria Guimaraes)
10 VITOR GOMES (Rio Ave)
15 ZEZINANDO (Estoril Praia)

FORWARDS
7 BRUNO GAMA (Sporting Braga)
16 DIOGO TAVARES (Monza Brianza, Ita)
11 FABIO COENTRAO (Rio Ave)
19 GUEDES (Penafiel)
9 ZEQUINHA (Tourizense)

COACH: Jose COUCEIRO

SCOTLAND

GOALKEEPERS
12 Scott FOX (Celtic)
21 Greg KELLY (Aberdeen)
1 Andrew McNEIL (Hibernian)

DEFENDERS
2 Andrew CAVE-BROWN (Norwich, Eng)
14 Andrew CONSIDINE (Aberdeen)
5 Scott CUTHBERT (Celtic)
15 Garry KENNETH (Dundee United)
19 Alan LOWING (Rangers)
13 Ryan O'LEARY (Kilmarnock)
6 Mark REYNOLDS (Motherwell)
3 Lee WALLACE (Hearts)

MIDFIELDERS
4 Jamie ADAMS (Kilmarnock)
11 Ryan CONROY (Celtic)
20 Brian GILMOUR (Clyde)
7 Michael McGLINCHEY (Celtic)

FORWARDS
16 Ross CAMPBELL (Hibernian)
10 Graham DORRANS (Livingston)
8 Calum ELLIOT (Hearts)
9 Steven FLETCHER (Hibernian)
17 Sean LYNCH (Hibernian)
18 Robert SNODGRASS (Livingston)

COACH: Archie GEMMILL

SOUTH KOREA

GOALKEEPERS
1 JO Su-huk (Konkuk University)
21 KIM Jin-hyeon (Dongguk University)
12 LEE Jin-hyung (Dankook University)

DEFENDERS
4 AN Hyun-shik (Yonsei University)
20 BAE Seung-jin (Yokohama FC, Jap)
2 CHOI Chul-soon (Chonbuk Motors)
5 KI Sung-yueng (FC Seoul)

MIDFIELDERS
15 JEONG Kyung-ho (Gyeongnam)
8 KIM Dong-suk (FC Seoul)
14 LEE Chung-yong (FC Seoul)
16 LEE Hyun-seung (Chonbuk Motors)
9 LEE Sang-ho (Ulsan Hyundai)
6 PARK Hyun-bem (Yonsei University)
7 PARK Jong-jin (JEF United, Jap)
11 PARK Joo-ho (Soongsil University)
3 SHIN Kwang-hoon (Pohang Steelers)
17 SONG Jin-hyung (FC Seoul)

FORWARDS
19 HA Tae-goon (Suwon Bluewings)
13 LEE Sung-jae (Pohang Steelers)
10 SHIM Young-sung (Jeju United)
18 SHIN Young-rok (Suwon Bluewings)

COACH: CHO Dong-hyun

SPAIN

GOALKEEPERS
1 ADNAN (Real Madrid)
13 Angel BERNABE (Atletico Madrid)
21 JAVI MARTINEZ (Albacete)

DEFENDERS
2 Antonio BARRAGAN (Liverpool, Eng)
12 Roberto CANELLA (Sporting Gijon)
3 Jose CRESPO (Sevilla)
17 Gorka ELUSTONDO (Real Sociedad)
4 MARC VALIENTE (Barcelona)
5 Gerard PIQUE (Zaragoza)

MIDFIELDERS
18 ADRIAN LOPEZ (Deportivo La Coruna)
19 Marcos GARCIA (Villarreal)
14 Adrian GONZALEZ (Real Madrid)
15 Iriome GONZALEZ (Tenerife)
10 Esteban GRANERO (Real Madrid)
8 JAVI GARCIA (Real Madrid)
6 MARIO SUAREZ (Atletico Madrid)
20 Sunny STEPHEN (Ejido)
7 TONI CALVO (Barcelona)

FORWARDS
9 Alberto BUENO (Real Madrid)
11 Diego CAPEL (Sevilla)
16 Juan Manuel MATA (Real Madrid)

COACH: Gines MELENDEZ

UNITED STATES

GOALKEEPERS
18 Brian PERK (UCLA)
21 Stephen SANDBO (Ohio Thunder)
1 Chris SEITZ (Real Salt Lake)

DEFENDERS
4 Amaechi IGWE (New England Revolution)
13 Ofori SARKODIE (Indiana University)
5 Nathan STURGIS (Los Angeles Galaxy)
16 Julian VALENTIN (Wake Forest)
14 Anthony WALLACE (FC Dallas)
2 Tim WARD (Columbus Crew)

MIDFIELDERS
11 Freddy ADU (Real Salt Lake)
3 Bryan ARGUEZ (DC United)
19 Tony BELTRAN (UCLA)
6 Michael BRADLEY (Heerenveen, Hol)
10 Dax McCARTY (FC Dallas)
8 Robbie ROGERS (Columbus Crew)
7 Danny SZETELA (Columbus Crew)
15 Sal ZIZZO (UCLA)

FORWARDS
20 Andre AKPAN (Harvard University)
12 Josmer ALTIDORE (New York Red Bulls)
17 Gabe FERRARI (Sampdoria, Ita)
9 Preston ZIMMERMAN (Hamburg, Ger)

COACH: Thomas RONGEN (Hol)

URUGUAY

GOALKEEPERS
21 Yai FONTES (Wanderers)
1 Mauro GOICOECHEA (Danubio)
12 Yonatan IRRAZABAL (Defensor Sporting)

DEFENDERS
3 Martin CACERES (Defensor Sporting)
13 Juan Manuel DIAZ (Liverpool)
4 Alejandro GONZALEZ (Penarol)
6 Gary KAGELMACHER (Danubio)
2 Mauricio PRIETO (River Plate)
8 Damian SUAREZ (Defensor Sporting)

MIDFIELDERS
20 Emiliano ALFARO (Liverpool)
11 Elias FIGUEROA (Liverpool)
15 Enzo RUIZ (Penarol)
18 Luis SUAREZ (Groningen, Hol)
17 Juan SURRACO (Udinese, Ita)
19 Tabare VIUDEZ (Defensor Sporting)

FORWARDS
14 Hugo ARISMENDI (Nacional)
7 Mathias CARDACCIO (Nacional)
9 Edinson CAVANI (Palermo, Ita)
16 Bruno MONTELONGO (River Plate)
5 Marcel ROMAN (Danubio)
10 Gerardo VONDER PUTTEN (Danubio)

COACH: Gustavo FERRIN

ZAMBIA

GOALKEEPERS
21 Bob Gift BANDA (Kabwe Warriors)
1 Jacob BANDA (Zesco United)
16 Danny MUNYAO (Red Arrow)

DEFENDERS
4 Dennis BANDA (Green Buffaloes)
6 Richard CHIBWE (National Assembly)
14 Goodson KACHINGA (Red Arrow)
5 Henry NYAMBE (Forest Rangers)
3 Joseph ZIMBA (Red Arrow)

MIDFIELDERS
2 Peter MALAMA (Nchanga Rangers)
10 Clifford MULENGA (Pretoria University, SAf)
12 Sebastian MWANSA (Green Buffaloes)
8 William NJOBVU (Lusaka Dynamos)
7 Richard PHIRI (Red Arrow)
13 Musatwe SIMUTOWE (Zamtel)
20 Stophira SUNZU (Konkola Blades)
11 Fwayo TEMBO (Edusport)
15 Justine ZULU (National Assembly)

FORWARDS
18 Rodgers KOLA (Edusport)
9 Simon LUPIYA (Red Arrow)
19 Emmanuel MAYUKA (Kabwe Warriors)
17 Floyd PHIRI (Nchanga Rangers)

COACH: George LWANDAMINA

EUROPE: WHO GOES WHERE

COUNTRY	CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP STAGE	CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUALIFIERS	UEFA CUP	INTERTOTO CUP	RELEGATED	PROMOTED
ALBANIA		SK Tirana	Besa Kavaje (CW), Teuta Durres	Vllaznia	Luftetari, Apolonia	Skenderbeu, Beselidhja
ANDORRA		Ranger's	Santa Coloma (CW)	Sant Julia	Encamp, AC d'Escaldes	SE Casa del Benfica, Engordany
ARMENIA*		Pyunik	Banants (CW), Mika Ashtarak	Ararat	none	Lernayin Artsakh (later withdrew)
AUSTRIA		Salzburg	Austria Wien (CW), SV Ried, Mattersburg	Rapid Wien	Grazer AK	LASK Linz
AZERBAIJAN		Khazar	MKT Araz (CF), Neftchi	FK Baku	Shakhdag, Ganca (excluded)	Masallu, Standard
BELARUS*		BATE Borisov	Dinamo Brest (CW), Dinamo Minsk	Shakhtyor	Lokomotiv Minsk, Belshina Bobruisk	FK Minsk, Smarhon
BELGIUM		Anderlecht, Genk	Club Brugge (CW), Standard Liege	Gent	Lierse, Beveren	Verbroedering Dender, Mechelen
BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA		Sarajevo	Siroki Brijeg (CW), Zrinjski	Slavija	Borac Banja Luka, Radnik Bijeljina	Travnik, Laktasi
BULGARIA		Levski Sofia	Litex Lovech (CF), CSKA Sofia, Lokomotiv Sofia	Cherno More	Rilski, Rodopa, Chernomorets	Chernomorets B, Pirin B, Vidima-Rakovski
CROATIA		Dinamo Zagreb	Slaven Belupo (CF), Hajduk Split	Zagreb	Pula, Kamen Ingrad	Inter Zapresic, Zadar
CYPRUS		APOEL Nicosia	Anorthosis Famagusta (CW), Omonia Nicosia	Ethnikos Achnas	Digenis, Ayia Napa, AEP	APOP/Kinyras Peyias, Alki, Doxa
CZECH REPUBLIC		Sparta Prague, Slavia Prague	Jablonec (CF), Mlada Boleslav	Slovan Liberec	Pribram, Slovacko	Viktoria Zizkov, Bohemians
DENMARK		FC Copenhagen	OB Odense (CW), Midtjylland	AaB	Vejle, Silkeborg	Lyngby, AGF Aarhus
ENGLAND	Manchester United, Chelsea	Liverpool, Arsenal	Tottenham, Everton, Bolton	Blackburn	Sheffield Utd, Charlton, Watford	Sunderland, Birmingham, Derby
ESTONIA*		Levadia Tallinn	Trans Narva (CF), Flora Tallinn	TVMK	Warrior Valga	Kuressaare, Kalev Tallinn
FAROE ISLANDS*		HB	B36 (CW), EB/Streymur	KI	B68, IF	B71, AB
FINLAND*		Tampere United	HJK Helsinki (CW), Haka, MyPa (FP)	Honka	KuPS Kuopio	Viikingit, Oulu
FRANCE	Lyon, Marseille	Toulouse	Sochaux (CW), Rennes, Bordeaux (LC)	Lens	Troyes, Sedan, Nantes	Metz, Caen, Strasbourg
GEORGIA		Olimpi Rustavi	Ameri Tbilisi (CW), Dinamo Tbilisi	Zestaponi	Dila Gori, Kakheti Telavi	Mglebi, Meskheti
GERMANY	Stuttgart, Schalke	Werder Bremen	Nurnberg (CW), Bayern Munich, Bayer Leverkusen	Hamburg	Mainz, Alemannia, Monchengladbach	Karlsruhe, Hansa Rostock, Duisburg
GREECE	Olympiakos	AEK Athens	Larisa (CW), Panathinaikos, Aris, Panionios	OFI	Kerkira, Aigaleo, Ionikos	Asteras Tripolis, Levadiakos, Veria
HOLLAND	PSV Eindhoven	Ajax	AZ Alkmaar, Twente Enschede, Heerenveen, Groningen	Utrecht	RKC Waalwijk, Den Haag	De Graafschap, VVV Venlo
HUNGARY		Debrecen	Honved (CW), MTK	Zalaegerszeg	Pecs, Vac	Nyiregyhaza, Siofok
ICELAND*		FH	Keflavik (CW), KR	Valur	Grindavik, IBV	Fram, HK
IRELAND, REPUBLIC OF*		Derry City	St Patrick's Athletic (CF), Drogheda United	Cork City	Shelbourne (demoted), Dublin City (withdrew)	Shamrock Rovers, Galway United
ISRAEL		Beitar Jerusalem	Hapoel Tel Aviv (CW), Mac. Netanya, Mac. Tel Aviv	Maccabi Haifa	HA Ramat Gan, Hapoel Petach Tikva	Ironi Kiriat-Shmona, Bnei Sakhnin
ITALY	Internazionale, Roma, Milan (TH)	Lazio	Fiorentina, Palermo, Empoli	Sampdoria	Chievo, Ascoli, Messina	Juventus, Napoli, Genoa

A country-by-country breakdown of all the 2007-08 UEFA club competition representatives, plus the ups and downs in each domestic top flight

COUNTRY	CHAMPIONS LEAGUE GROUP STAGE	CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUALIFIERS	UEFA CUP	INTERTOTO CUP	RELEGATED	PROMOTED
KAZAKHSTAN*		Astana	Alma Ata (CW), Aktobe	Tobol	Energetik Pavlodar	Jetisu Taldikorghan
LATVIA*		Ventspils	Metalurgs Liepaja (CW), Skonto Riga	Dinaburg	Dizvanagi Rezekne	JFK Olimps Riga
LIECHTENSTEIN			Vaduz (CW)		n/a	n/a
LITHUANIA*		FBK Kaunas	Suduva (CW), Ekranas	Vetra	Nevezis Kedainiai	Interas Visaginas
LUXEMBOURG		F91 Dudelange	Kaerjeng (CF), Etzella Ettelbruck	Differdange	Mondercange, Mamer	Hamm Benfica, Avenir Beggen
MACEDONIA		Pobeda	Vardar (CW), Rabotnicki	Makedonija	Bregalnica, Vlazrimi	Milano, Cementarnica
MALTA		Marsaxlokk	Hibernians (CW), Sliema Wanderers	Birkirkara	St George's, Marsa	Hamrun Spartans, Mqabba
MOLDOVA		Sheriff Tiraspol	Zimbru Chisinau (CW), Nistru Otaci	Dacia Chisinau	none	Rapid Ghidighici, CSCA Chisinau
MONTENEGRO		Zeta	Rudar Pljevlja (CW), Buducnost	Grbalj	Jedinstvo BP, Berane	Lovcen, Bokelj
NORTHERN IRELAND		Linfield	Dungannon Swifts (CF), Glentoran	Cliftonville	Loughgall	Institute
NORWAY*		Rosenborg	Fredrikstad (CW), Brann, Valerenga, Lillestrom (FP)		Ham-Kam, Molde	Stromsgodset, Aalesund
POLAND		Zaglebie Lubin	Groclin Grodzisk (CW), GKS Belchatow	Legia Warsaw	Wisla Plock, Pogon, Arka[1], Gornik Leczna[1]	Ruch Chorzow, Jagiellonia, Polonia B, Zaglebie S
PORTUGAL	FC Porto, Sporting Lisbon	Benfica	Belenenses (CF), Sporting Braga, Pacos Ferreira	Uniao Leiria	Beira Mar, Aves	Leixoes, Vitoria Guimaraes
ROMANIA		Dinamo Bucharest, Steaua Bucharest	Rapid Bucharest (CW), CFR Cluj	Gloria Bistrita, Otelul Galati	National, Arges, Jiul	Universitatea Cluj, Dacia, Gloria Buzau
RUSSIA*	CSKA Moscow	Spartak Moscow	Lokomotiv Moscow (CW), Zenit St Petersburg	Rubin Kazan	Torpedo Moscow, Shinnik Yaroslavl	Khimki, Kuban Krasnodar
SAN MARINO		Murata	Libertas (CF)			
SCOTLAND		Celtic, Rangers	Dunfermline (CF), Aberdeen		Dunfermline	Gretna
SERBIA		Red Star Belgrade	Vojvodina (CF), Partizan Belgrade, Bezanija	Hajduk Kula	Vozdovac, Zemun, Mladost A (withdrew)	Mladost L, Cukaricki, Napredak
SLOVAKIA		Zilina	Zlate Moravce (CW), Artmedia Bratislava	Slovan Bratislava	Inter Bratislava	Zlate Moravce
SLOVENIA		Domzale	Koper (CW), Gorica	Maribor	Bela	Livar Ivancna
SPAIN	Real Madrid, Barcelona	Sevilla, Valencia	Getafe (CF), Zaragoza, Villarreal	Atletico Madrid	Celta Vigo, Real Sociedad, Gimnastic	Valladolid, Almeria, Murcia
SWEDEN*		Elfsborg	Helsingborgs (CW), AIK, Hacken (FP)	Hammarby	Hacken, Osters, Orgryte	Trelleborgs, Orebro, Brommapojkarna
SWITZERLAND		Zurich	Basle (CW), Sion, Young Boys	St Gallen	Schaffhausen	Neuchatel Xamax
TURKEY		Fenerbahce, Besiktas	Erciyesspor (CF), Galatasaray	Trabzonspor	Antalyaspor, Erciyesspor, Sakaryaspor	Genclerbirligi Oftas, Istanbul BB, Kasimpasa
UKRAINE		Kyiv Dynamo, Shakhtar Donetsk	Metalist, Dnipro	Chornomorets	Illichivets, Stal	Naftovyk, Zakarpattya
WALES		The New Saints	Carmarthen Town (CW), Rhyl	Llanelli	Cwmbran	Llangefni, Neath

Qualification for the UEFA Cup is by virtue of finishing position in domestic league except where stated – as domestic cup winners (CW), losing domestic cup finalists (CF), domestic league cup winners (LC), fair play entrants (FP).
TH = Milan qualified for Champions League group stage as title holders

**Qualification for countries marked with an asterisk is based on 2006 domestic league season.*
[1]Demoted for their part in Poland's match-fixing scandal

FIXTURES

FRANCE

Saturday, August 4, 2007
Rennes v Nancy
Bordeaux v Lens
Strasbourg v Marseille
Caen v Nice
Valenciennes v Toulouse
Lille v Lorient
Monaco v Saint-Etienne
Paris Saint-Germain v Sochaux

Sunday, August 5
Le Mans v Metz
Lyon v Auxerre

Saturday, August 11
Nancy v Caen
Nice v Strasbourg
Saint-Etienne v Valenciennes
Auxerre v Bordeaux
Sochaux v Le Mans
Toulouse v Lyon
Lorient v Monaco
Marseille v Rennes

Sunday, August 12
Metz v Lille
Lens v Paris Saint-Germain

Wednesday, August 15
Valenciennes v Marseille
Lille v Sochaux
Lyon v Lens
Monaco v Metz
Paris Saint-Germain v Lorient
Rennes v Saint-Etienne
Bordeaux v Le Mans
Strasbourg v Auxerre
Caen v Toulouse

Thursday, August 16
Nancy v Nice

Saturday, August 18
Saint-Etienne v Bordeaux
Auxerre v Caen
Sochaux v Monaco
Le Mans v Lille
Toulouse v Strasbourg
Lens v Valenciennes
Lorient v Lyon
Metz v Paris Saint-Germain

Sunday, August 19
Nice v Rennes
Marseille v Nancy

Saturday, August 25
Monaco v Le Mans
Nancy v Auxerre
Nice v Toulouse
Paris Saint-Germain v Lille
Rennes v Metz
Bordeaux v Lorient
Strasbourg v Lens
Caen v Marseille
Valenciennes v Sochaux
Lyon v Saint-Etienne

Wednesday, August 29
Saint-Etienne v Strasbourg
Auxerre v Rennes
Sochaux v Lyon
Le Mans v Paris Saint-Germain
Toulouse v Nancy
Lens v Caen
Lille v Monaco
Lorient v Valenciennes
Marseille v Nice
Metz v Bordeaux

Saturday, September 1
Strasbourg v Lorient
Bordeaux v Monaco
Toulouse v Auxerre
Caen v Sochaux
Valenciennes v Metz
Lyon v Le Mans
Nancy v Saint-Etienne
Nice v Lens
Paris Saint-Germain v Marseille
Rennes v Lille

Saturday, September 15
Lorient v Rennes
Marseille v Toulouse
Metz v Lyon
Monaco v Paris Saint-Germain
Auxerre v Nice
Saint-Etienne v Caen
Le Mans v Valenciennes
Sochaux v Strasbourg
Lens v Nancy
Lille v Bordeaux

Saturday, September 22
Valenciennes v Monaco
Lyon v Lille
Nancy v Lorient
Nice v Saint-Etienne
Paris Saint-Germain v Bordeaux
Rennes v Sochaux
Strasbourg v Le Mans
Auxerre v Marseille
Toulouse v Lens
Caen v Metz

Saturday, October 6
Monaco v Nancy
Paris Saint-Germain v Rennes
Bordeaux v Lyon
Saint-Etienne v Marseille
Le Mans v Nice
Sochaux v Toulouse
Lens v Auxerre
Lille v Valenciennes
Lorient v Caen
Metz v Strasbourg

Saturday, October 20
Marseille v Lens
Nancy v Sochaux
Nice v Metz
Rennes v Le Mans
Strasbourg v Bordeaux
Auxerre v Lorient
Toulouse v Saint-Etienne
Caen v Lille
Valenciennes v Paris Saint-Germain
Lyon v Monaco

Saturday, October 27
Paris Saint-Germain v Lyon
Bordeaux v Valenciennes
Saint-Etienne v Auxerre
Le Mans v Toulouse
Sochaux v Marseille
Lens v Rennes
Lille v Strasbourg
Lorient v Nice
Metz v Nancy
Monaco v Caen

Saturday, November 3
Rennes v Monaco
Auxerre v Lille
Strasbourg v Paris Saint-Germain
Caen v Le Mans
Toulouse v Metz
Lens v Saint-Etienne
Lyon v Valenciennes
Marseille v Lorient
Nancy v Bordeaux
Nice v Sochaux

Saturday, November 10
Lyon v Marseille
Metz v Lens
Monaco v Strasbourg
Paris Saint-Germain v Nancy
Bordeaux v Rennes
Sochaux v Auxerre
Le Mans v Saint-Etienne
Valenciennes v Caen
Lille v Nice
Lorient v Toulouse

Saturday, November 24
Toulouse v Monaco
Lens v Lorient
Marseille v Metz
Nancy v Lille
Nice v Paris Saint-Germain
Rennes v Lyon
Saint-Etienne v Sochaux
Auxerre v Le Mans
Strasbourg v Valenciennes
Caen v Bordeaux

Saturday, December 1
Monaco v Nice
Paris Saint-Germain v Caen
Bordeaux v Toulouse
Sochaux v Lens
Le Mans v Nancy
Valenciennes v Rennes
Lille v Marseille
Lorient v Saint-Etienne
Lyon v Strasbourg
Metz v Auxerre

Saturday, December 8
Lorient v Sochaux
Marseille v Monaco
Nancy v Valenciennes
Nice v Bordeaux
Saint-Etienne v Metz
Auxerre v Paris Saint-Germain
Strasbourg v Rennes
Caen v Lyon
Toulouse v Lille
Lens v Le Mans

Saturday, December 15
Rennes v Caen
Bordeaux v Marseille
Strasbourg v Nancy
Le Mans v Lorient
Valenciennes v Auxerre
Lille v Saint-Etienne
Lyon v Nice
Metz v Sochaux
Monaco v Lens
Paris Saint-Germain v Toulouse

Saturday, December 22
Saint-Etienne v Paris Saint-Germain
Auxerre v Monaco
Sochaux v Bordeaux
Caen v Strasbourg
Toulouse v Rennes
Lens v Lille
Lorient v Metz
Marseille v Le Mans
Nancy v Lyon
Nice v Valenciennes

Saturday, January 12, 2008
Lille v Metz
Caen v Nancy
Strasbourg v Nice
Valenciennes v Saint-Etienne
Bordeaux v Auxerre
Le Mans v Sochaux
Paris Saint-Germain v Lens
Lyon v Toulouse
Monaco v Lorient
Rennes v Marseille

Saturday, January 19
Marseille v Valenciennes
Sochaux v Lille
Lens v Lyon
Metz v Monaco
Nice v Nancy
Lorient v Paris Saint-Germain
Saint-Etienne v Rennes
Le Mans v Bordeaux
Auxerre v Strasbourg
Toulouse v Caen

Wednesday, January 23
Rennes v Nice
Bordeaux v Saint-Etienne
Caen v Auxerre
Monaco v Sochaux
Lille v Le Mans
Strasbourg v Toulouse
Valenciennes v Lens
Lyon v Lorient
Nancy v Marseille
Paris Saint-Germain v Metz

Saturday, January 26
Le Mans v Monaco
Auxerre v Nancy
Toulouse v Nice
Lille v Paris Saint-Germain
Metz v Rennes
Lorient v Bordeaux
Lens v Strasbourg
Marseille v Caen
Sochaux v Valenciennes
Saint-Etienne v Lyon

Saturday, February 9
Strasbourg v Saint-Etienne
Rennes v Auxerre
Lyon v Sochaux
Paris Saint-Germain v Le Mans
Nancy v Toulouse
Caen v Lens
Monaco v Lille
Valenciennes v Lorient
Nice v Marseille
Bordeaux v Metz

Saturday, February 16
Lorient v Strasbourg
Monaco v Bordeaux
Auxerre v Toulouse
Sochaux v Caen
Metz v Valenciennes
Le Mans v Lyon
Saint-Etienne v Nancy
Lens v Nice
Marseille v Paris Saint-Germain
Lille v Rennes

Saturday, February 23
Rennes v Lorient
Toulouse v Marseille
Lyon v Metz
Paris Saint-Germain v Monaco
Nice v Auxerre
Caen v Saint-Etienne
Valenciennes v Le Mans
Strasbourg v Sochaux
Nancy v Lens
Bordeaux v Lille

Saturday, March 1
Monaco v Valenciennes
Lille v Lyon
Lorient v Nancy
Saint-Etienne v Nice
Bordeaux v Paris Saint-Germain
Sochaux v Rennes
Le Mans v Strasbourg
Marseille v Auxerre
Lens v Toulouse
Metz v Caen

Saturday, March 8
Nancy v Monaco
Rennes v Paris Saint-Germain
Lyon v Bordeaux
Marseille v Saint-Etienne
Nice v Le Mans
Toulouse v Sochaux
Auxerre v Lens
Valenciennes v Lille
Caen v Lorient
Strasbourg v Metz

Saturday, March 15
Lens v Marseille
Sochaux v Nancy
Metz v Nice
Le Mans v Rennes
Bordeaux v Strasbourg
Lorient v Auxerre
Saint-Etienne v Toulouse
Lille v Caen
Paris Saint-Germain v Valenciennes
Monaco v Lyon

Saturday, March 22
Lyon v Paris Saint-Germain
Valenciennes v Bordeaux
Auxerre v Saint-Etienne
Toulouse v Le Mans
Marseille v Sochaux
Rennes v Lens
Strasbourg v Lille
Nice v Lorient
Nancy v Metz
Caen v Monaco

Sunday, March 30
Monaco v Rennes
Lille v Auxerre
Paris Saint-Germain v Strasbourg
Le Mans v Caen
Metz v Toulouse
Saint-Etienne v Lens
Valenciennes v Lyon
Lorient v Marseille
Bordeaux v Nancy
Sochaux v Nice

Saturday, April 5
Marseille v Lyon
Lens v Metz
Strasbourg v Monaco
Nancy v Paris Saint-Germain
Rennes v Bordeaux
Auxerre v Sochaux
Saint-Etienne v Le Mans
Caen v Valenciennes
Nice v Lille
Toulouse v Lorient

Saturday, April 12
Monaco v Toulouse
Lorient v Lens
Metz v Marseille
Lille v Nancy
Paris Saint-Germain v Nice
Lyon v Rennes
Sochaux v Saint-Etienne
Le Mans v Auxerre
Valenciennes v Strasbourg
Bordeaux v Caen

Saturday, April 19
Nice v Monaco
Caen v Paris Saint-Germain
Toulouse v Bordeaux
Lens v Sochaux
Nancy v Le Mans
Rennes v Valenciennes
Marseille v Lille
Saint-Etienne v Lorient
Strasbourg v Lyon
Auxerre v Metz

Saturday, April 26
Sochaux v Lorient
Monaco v Marseille
Valenciennes v Nancy
Bordeaux v Nice
Metz v Saint-Etienne
Paris Saint-Germain v Auxerre
Rennes v Strasbourg
Lyon v Caen
Lille v Toulouse
Le Mans v Lens

Saturday, May 3
Caen v Rennes
Marseille v Bordeaux
Nancy v Strasbourg
Lorient v Le Mans
Auxerre v Valenciennes
Saint-Etienne v Lille
Nice v Lyon
Sochaux v Metz
Lens v Monaco
Toulouse v Paris Saint-Germain

Saturday, May 10
Paris Saint-Germain v Saint-Etienne
Monaco v Auxerre
Bordeaux v Sochaux
Strasbourg v Caen
Rennes v Toulouse
Lille v Lens
Metz v Lorient
Le Mans v Marseille
Lyon v Nancy
Valenciennes v Nice

Saturday, May 17
Auxerre v Lyon
Saint-Etienne v Monaco
Sochaux v Paris Saint-Germain
Nancy v Rennes
Lens v Bordeaux
Marseille v Strasbourg
Nice v Caen
Toulouse v Valenciennes
Metz v Le Mans
Lorient v Lille

GERMANY

Friday, August 10, 2007
Stuttgart v Schalke

Saturday, August 11
Bayern Munich v Hansa Rostock
Bayer Leverkusen v Energie Cottbus
Bochum v Werder Bremen
Hannover v Hamburg
Eintracht Frankfurt v Hertha Berlin
Wolfsburg v Arminia Bielefeld

Sunday, August 12
Nurnberg v Karlsruhe
Borussia Dortmund v Duisburg

Friday, August 17
Karlsruhe v Hannover

Saturday, August 18
Schalke v Borussia Dortmund
Werder Bremen v Bayern Munich
Hertha Berlin v Stuttgart
Arminia Bielefeld v Eintracht Frankfurt
Hansa Rostock v Nurnberg
Duisburg v Wolfsburg

Sunday, August 19
Hamburg v Bayer Leverkusen
Energie Cottbus v Bochum

Friday, August 24
Bochum v Hamburg

Saturday, August 25
Stuttgart v Duisburg
Bayern Munich v Hannover
Bayer Leverkusen v Karlsruhe
Nurnberg v Werder Bremen
Borussia Dortmund v Energie Cottbus
Arminia Bielefeld v Hertha Berlin

Sunday, August 26
Eintracht Frankfurt v Hansa Rostock
Wolfsburg v Schalke

Friday, August 31
Schalke v Bayer Leverkusen

Saturday, September 1
Werder Bremen v Eintracht Frankfurt
Hertha Berlin v Wolfsburg
Hannover v Bochum
Energie Cottbus v Nurnberg
Hansa Rostock v Borussia Dortmund
Duisburg v Arminia Bielefeld

Sunday, September 2
Hamburg v Bayern Munich
Karlsruhe v Stuttgart

Friday, September 14
Borussia Dortmund v Werder Bremen

Saturday, September 15
Stuttgart v Energie Cottbus
Bayern Munich v Schalke
Bayer Leverkusen v Bochum
Nurnberg v Hannover
Arminia Bielefeld v Hansa Rostock
Eintracht Frankfurt v Hamburg

Sunday, September 16
Wolfsburg v Karlsruhe
Duisburg v Hertha Berlin

Saturday, September 22
Schalke v Arminia Bielefeld
Werder Bremen v Stuttgart
Hamburg v Nurnberg
Bochum v Eintracht Frankfurt
Hertha Berlin v Borussia Dortmund
Hannover v Bayer Leverkusen
Energie Cottbus v Wolfsburg
Karlsruhe v Bayern Munich
Hansa Rostock v Duisburg

Wednesday, September 26
Stuttgart v Bochum
Bayern Munich v Energie Cottbus
Nurnberg v Bayer Leverkusen
Borussia Dortmund v Hamburg
Hertha Berlin v Hansa Rostock
Arminia Bielefeld v Hannover
Eintracht Frankfurt v Karlsruhe
Wolfsburg v Werder Bremen
Duisburg v Schalke

Saturday, September 29
Schalke v Hertha Berlin
Werder Bremen v Arminia Bielefeld
Bayer Leverkusen v Bayern Munich
Hamburg v Wolfsburg
Bochum v Nurnberg
Hannover v Duisburg
Energie Cottbus v Eintracht Frankfurt
Karlsruhe v Borussia Dortmund
Hansa Rostock v Stuttgart

Saturday, October 6
Stuttgart v Hannover
Schalke v Karlsruhe
Bayern Munich v Nurnberg
Borussia Dortmund v Bochum
Hertha Berlin v Energie Cottbus
Arminia Bielefeld v Hamburg
Eintracht Frankfurt v Bayer Leverkusen
Wolfsburg v Hansa Rostock
Duisburg v Werder Bremen

Saturday, October 20
Werder Bremen v Hertha Berlin
Bayer Leverkusen v Borussia Dortmund
Nurnberg v Eintracht Frankfurt
Hamburg v Stuttgart
Bochum v Bayern Munich
Hannover v Wolfsburg
Energie Cottbus v Duisburg
Karlsruhe v Arminia Bielefeld
Hansa Rostock v Schalke

Saturday, October 27
Stuttgart v Bayer Leverkusen
Schalke v Werder Bremen
Borussia Dortmund v Bayern Munich
Hertha Berlin v Bochum
Arminia Bielefeld v Energie Cottbus
Eintracht Frankfurt v Hannover
Wolfsburg v Nurnberg
Hansa Rostock v Karlsruhe
Duisburg v Hamburg

Saturday, November 3
Werder Bremen v Hansa Rostock
Bayern Munich v Eintracht Frankfurt
Bayer Leverkusen v Arminia Bielefeld
Nurnberg v Stuttgart
Hamburg v Hertha Berlin
Bochum v Wolfsburg
Hannover v Borussia Dortmund
Energie Cottbus v Schalke
Karlsruhe v Duisburg

Saturday, November 10
Stuttgart v Bayern Munich
Schalke v Hamburg
Werder Bremen v Karlsruhe
Borussia Dortmund v Eintracht Frankfurt
Hertha Berlin v Hannover
Arminia Bielefeld v Nurnberg
Wolfsburg v Bayer Leverkusen
Hansa Rostock v Energie Cottbus
Duisburg v Bochum

Saturday, November 24
Bayern Munich v Wolfsburg
Bayer Leverkusen v Duisburg
Nurnberg v Borussia Dortmund
Hamburg v Hansa Rostock
Bochum v Arminia Bielefeld
Hannover v Schalke
Energie Cottbus v Werder Bremen
Eintracht Frankfurt v Stuttgart
Karlsruhe v Hertha Berlin

Saturday, December 1
Stuttgart v Borussia Dortmund
Schalke v Bochum
Werder Bremen v Hamburg
Hertha Berlin v Bayer Leverkusen
Arminia Bielefeld v Bayern Munich
Energie Cottbus v Karlsruhe
Wolfsburg v Eintracht Frankfurt
Hansa Rostock v Hannover
Duisburg v Nurnberg

Saturday, December 8
Stuttgart v Wolfsburg
Bayern Munich v Duisburg
Bayer Leverkusen v Hansa Rostock
Nurnberg v Hertha Berlin
Hamburg v Energie Cottbus
Bochum v Karlsruhe
Borussia Dortmund v Arminia Bielefeld
Hannover v Werder Bremen
Eintracht Frankfurt v Schalke

Saturday, December 15
Schalke v Nurnberg
Werder Bremen v Bayer Leverkusen
Hertha Berlin v Bayern Munich
Arminia Bielefeld v Stuttgart
Energie Cottbus v Hannover
Wolfsburg v Borussia Dortmund
Karlsruhe v Hamburg
Hansa Rostock v Bochum
Duisburg v Eintracht Frankfurt

Saturday, February 2, 2008
Schalke v Stuttgart
Hansa Rostock v Bayern Munich
Energie Cottbus v Bayer Leverkusen
Karlsruhe v Nurnberg
Werder Bremen v Bochum
Duisburg v Borussia Dortmund
Hamburg v Hannover
Hertha Berlin v Eintracht Frankfurt
Arminia Bielefeld v Wolfsburg

Saturday, February 9
Borussia Dortmund v Schalke
Bayern Munich v Werder Bremen
Bayer Leverkusen v Hamburg
Stuttgart v Hertha Berlin
Eintracht Frankfurt v Arminia Bielefeld
Bochum v Energie Cottbus
Hannover v Karlsruhe
Nurnberg v Hansa Rostock
Wolfsburg v Duisburg

Saturday, February 16
Duisburg v Stuttgart
Hannover v Bayern Munich
Karlsruhe v Bayer Leverkusen
Werder Bremen v Nurnberg
Hamburg v Bochum
Energie Cottbus v Borussia Dortmund
Hertha Berlin v Arminia Bielefeld
Hansa Rostock v Eintracht Frankfurt
Schalke v Wolfsburg

Saturday, February 23
Bayer Leverkusen v Schalke
Eintracht Frankfurt v Werder Bremen
Bayern Munich v Hamburg
Wolfsburg v Hertha Berlin
Bochum v Hannover
Nurnberg v Energie Cottbus
Stuttgart v Karlsruhe
Borussia Dortmund v Hansa Rostock
Arminia Bielefeld v Duisburg

Saturday, March 1
Energie Cottbus v Stuttgart
Schalke v Bayern Munich
Bochum v Bayer Leverkusen
Hannover v Nurnberg
Werder Bremen v Borussia Dortmund
Hansa Rostock v Arminia Bielefeld
Hamburg v Eintracht Frankfurt
Karlsruhe v Wolfsburg
Hertha Berlin v Duisburg

Saturday, March 8
Arminia Bielefeld v Schalke
Stuttgart v Werder Bremen
Nurnberg v Hamburg
Eintracht Frankfurt v Bochum
Borussia Dortmund v Hertha Berlin
Bayer Leverkusen v Hannover
Wolfsburg v Energie Cottbus
Bayern Munich v Karlsruhe
Duisburg v Hansa Rostock

Saturday, March 15
Bochum v Stuttgart
Energie Cottbus v Bayern Munich
Bayer Leverkusen v Nurnberg
Hamburg v Borussia Dortmund
Hansa Rostock v Hertha Berlin
Hannover v Arminia Bielefeld
Karlsruhe v Eintracht Frankfurt
Werder Bremen v Wolfsburg
Schalke v Duisburg

Saturday, March 22
Hertha Berlin v Schalke
Arminia Bielefeld v Werder Bremen
Bayern Munich v Bayer Leverkusen
Wolfsburg v Hamburg
Nurnberg v Bochum
Duisburg v Hannover
Eintracht Frankfurt v Energie Cottbus
Borussia Dortmund v Karlsruhe
Stuttgart v Hansa Rostock

Saturday, March 29
Hannover v Stuttgart
Karlsruhe v Schalke
Nurnberg v Bayern Munich
Bochum v Borussia Dortmund
Energie Cottbus v Hertha Berlin
Hamburg v Arminia Bielefeld
Bayer Leverkusen v Eintracht Frankfurt
Hansa Rostock v Wolfsburg
Werder Bremen v Duisburg

Saturday, April 5
Hertha Berlin v Werder Bremen
Borussia Dortmund v Bayer Leverkusen
Eintracht Frankfurt v Nurnberg
Stuttgart v Hamburg
Bayern Munich v Bochum
Wolfsburg v Hannover
Duisburg v Energie Cottbus
Arminia Bielefeld v Karlsruhe
Schalke v Hansa Rostock

Saturday, April 12
Bayer Leverkusen v Stuttgart
Werder Bremen v Schalke
Bayern Munich v Borussia Dortmund
Bochum v Hertha Berlin
Energie Cottbus v Arminia Bielefeld
Hannover v Eintracht Frankfurt
Nurnberg v Wolfsburg
Karlsruhe v Hansa Rostock
Hamburg v Duisburg

Wednesday, April 16
Hansa Rostock v Werder Bremen
Eintracht Frankfurt v Bayern Munich
Arminia Bielefeld v Bayer Leverkusen
Stuttgart v Nurnberg
Hertha Berlin v Hamburg
Wolfsburg v Bochum
Borussia Dortmund v Hannover
Schalke v Energie Cottbus
Duisburg v Karlsruhe

Saturday, April 26
Bayern Munich v Stuttgart
Hamburg v Schalke
Karlsruhe v Werder Bremen
Eintracht Frankfurt v Borussia Dortmund
Hannover v Hertha Berlin
Nurnberg v Arminia Bielefeld
Bayer Leverkusen v Wolfsburg
Energie Cottbus v Hansa Rostock
Bochum v Duisburg

Saturday, May 3
Wolfsburg v Bayern Munich
Duisburg v Bayer Leverkusen
Borussia Dortmund v Nurnberg
Hansa Rostock v Hamburg
Arminia Bielefeld v Bochum
Schalke v Hannover
Werder Bremen v Energie Cottbus
Stuttgart v Eintracht Frankfurt
Hertha Berlin v Karlsruhe

Wednesday, May 7
Borussia Dortmund v Stuttgart
Bochum v Schalke
Hamburg v Werder Bremen
Bayer Leverkusen v Hertha Berlin
Bayern Munich v Arminia Bielefeld
Karlsruhe v Energie Cottbus
Eintracht Frankfurt v Wolfsburg
Hannover v Hansa Rostock
Nurnberg v Duisburg

Saturday, May 10
Wolfsburg v Stuttgart
Duisburg v Bayern Munich
Hansa Rostock v Bayer Leverkusen
Hertha Berlin v Nurnberg
Energie Cottbus v Hamburg
Karlsruhe v Bochum
Arminia Bielefeld v Borussia Dortmund
Werder Bremen v Hannover
Schalke v Eintracht Frankfurt

Saturday, May 17
Nurnberg v Schalke
Bayer Leverkusen v Werder Bremen
Bayern Munich v Hertha Berlin
Stuttgart v Arminia Bielefeld
Hannover v Energie Cottbus
Borussia Dortmund v Wolfsburg
Hamburg v Karlsruhe
Bochum v Hansa Rostock
Eintracht Frankfurt v Duisburg

The attacking full-back: Ashley Cole

The Chelsea man was judged best by his fellow players

● INTELLIGENCE
"He's an instinctive attacking full-back, getting forward as much as possible. He's had to put more thought into his game as a defender and in the last few years he has made huge progress. His positional play and reading of the game in general are much better. He realised he couldn't always rely on his super powers of recovery."

● CHARACTER
"Basically, he's a winner. Competition and coming out on top are what fires him. His tenacity and determination can never be questioned. It's all or nothing with him."

● ENDURANCE
"Ashley is a top athlete, someone with the ability to be very effective in attack and defence for the entire match. There aren't too many quiet phases in his game. He needs to play intensely for the whole 90 minutes and has the stamina to back it up."

● SPEED
"Pace is a vital requirement at the top level, and he has more than most. It's not only a question of having great acceleration. He always plays with maximum energy, vitality and directness. He explodes into life."

Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho on Ashley Cole

WHAT THEY SAID

GAEL GIVET
(MARSEILLE)
"Roberto Carlos [Fenerbahce] is dynamic, quick, muscular and shoots as powerfully as anyone. But above all I admire his intense competitiveness, the hunger he shows week in, week out."

CHRISTOPH METZELDER
(REAL MADRID)

"Gianluca Zambrotta [Barcelona] is absolutely world class. He never stops powering forward, and the delivery of his final ball is always assured. The fact that he can play on either flank is a big bonus."

KASEY KELLER
(MONCHENGLADBACH)
"Since moving to Chelsea Ashley Cole hasn't quite made the impact he did at Arsenal. But if you give him total freedom, his speed and clever interplay will cause havoc."

PAULETA
(PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN)
"Willy Sagnol [Bayern Munich] is much underrated. Strikers need good service, and his crosses are on the money nine times out of 10."

ZLATAN IBRAHIMOVIC
(INTERNAZIONALE)
"As a former team-mate of Gianluca Zambrotta, I couldn't help but be impressed by his work on the flank. He just loves taking on defenders and has incredible levels of energy."

ERIC ABIDAL
(BARCELONA)
"I'd use three words to describe Daniel Alves [Sevilla]: explosive, adventurous and ruthless. He's guaranteed excitement."

PETRI PASANEN
(WERDER BREMEN)
"Massimo Oddo [Milan] is an attacker playing at right-back. Technically, he's very refined, and he has the ability to put in a great cross, however much pressure he's under."

LUCIO
(BAYERN MUNICH)
"I loved the way Ashley Cole linked with Robert Pires at Arsenal. He has the same sort of flair as us Brazilians."

KIM KALLSTROM
(LYON)
"I don't think I've ever seen John Arne Riise [Liverpool] play poorly. He makes things happen when he gets forward and has a habit of scoring sensational goals."

GERALD ASAMOAH
(SCHALKE)

"I don't think I've ever seen a player of such power and determination as Roberto Carlos."

ARTHUR BOKA
(STUTTGART)
"Defensively, Maicon [Internazionale] still has a way to go, but in terms of attacking penetration and quality of cross, he's the best around."

GREGORY TAFFOREAU
(LILLE)
"Ashley Cole doesn't have the power of Roberto Carlos but he's a more constant danger, always looking to break beyond midfield."

TOMAS GALASEK
(NURNBERG)
"Philipp Lahm [Bayern Munich] proved his worth at the last World Cup. He has a unique dribbling style which is very hard to counter."

HABIB BEYE
(MARSEILLE)
"Miguel has always impressed me with his overlapping, for Valencia and Portugal."

THE VOTES
3...Cole
2...Roberto Carlos, Zambrotta
1...Daniel Alves, Lahm, Maicon, Miguel, Oddo, Riise, Sagnol

Next month: The midfield enforcer
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